

The SMART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*



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The SMART SET

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The SMART SET

The Aristocrat Among Magazines

CHANSON CHINOISE

By George O'Neil

THE bridge's lanterns mark the stream
With crimson dagger scars,
And luminous as stars
The falling almond petals gleam. . . .

The straight deep orchard-ways are strewn
With over-ripened pears . . .
The dark pagoda wears
For diadem the circle moon.

Slow wind silvers a little knoll
Where willow trees are bowed;
And curling, golden, loud,
Rise lyrics of an oriole.

You do not heed the wondrous call
To garden realms he weaves,
But you shall watch the leaves
Whirl down behind the courtyard wall. . . .



TWO TRAGEDIES

By June Gibson

I

IN the garden.

A brilliant peacock, trailing plumage of gold and bright blue and emerald green, strutted haughtily down the path.

A sombre little violet nestled among green leaves.

The peacock crushed the violet with its claws as it stood by the water's edge gazing upon its gorgeous reflection in the pool.

dener worked among the flowers, whistling joyously, and laughing at the fright of a humming-bird that was startled by the gleam of his spade.

A shy young girl watched him timidly from the rose bushes, with eyes of love.

A beautiful woman came down the path and saw the Neapolitan and the shy young girl.

Breaking off a thorn from a rose-bush, she pressed it into her white finger.

"Boy," she said softly, brushing against him, "there is a thorn in my finger."

II

IN the garden.

A handsome young Neapolitan gar-



RETREAT

By Orrick Johns

I AM a changeless lover of the stirred
Rivers of rhyme;
Since first I watched old stars I have preferred
An older time.
Come not to me for songs that strive for glory,
Or strive at all—
I am a beggar whispering a story
Beneath a shadowed wall.



CONFESSION may be good for the soul, but it doesn't get one much reputation for sense.



EVERY man likes to have a woman explain him to himself.

THE DREAMERS

By L. M. Hussey

I

LIKE a sardonic duelist, fortune countered the irony of Paul Braun with an irony of her own; his diabolic parody of his own art gave him the appreciative celebrity and the ease of circumstances that half a lifetime of sincerity had failed to secure him. He understood the joke, and in his embittered way he laughed at it.

He wrote his Symphony with the Muted Tubas under an urge bitter and appalling, a shaft hurled madly at his own ideals, at the folly of his sincerity, at the soul of his sense of beauty. He designed this magnificent grotesquerie at a moment when his faculties must have trembled over the chasm of madness, like the life of a man poised between existence and oblivion in the crisis of a grave sickness. He composed it as a dreadful and excoriating sarcasm. Out of the symphonies that had been the labour of his earlier years he ripped those lovely and ineffable themes, refrains too perfect in their beauty for an easy recognition, and thrust them by the ears into this parody of himself, the grand concerts, symphonic in bulk and design, for the muted tubas. Fragile lyric ecstasies, little poems of sound, scored in his earlier inspiration for the flutes, he transcribed to the trombones and bassoons, whilst broad choral passages, grandly purposed for the choir of strings, were given an unearthly voice by the sardonically augmented section of the tubas, plugged with mutes.

This embodiment of his art in motley he put on paper during the immediate weeks following the rejection of his Eleventh Symphony. The Eleventh had

been wrung from him at the expense of prodigious labour, during the nights of a cold, long winter. Into it he had put all his maturer conception of beauty, all his deftness at orchestration, his adept cunning in sounds. Mary Braun, his wife, had been near him during the whole period of its writing down. Upon her he had spent those accumulated irritabilities that were thrown off in his brain like toxins during the ferment of creation. She sat in a chair in the same room, too far away from the light, endlessly sewing, never saying a word. Her face was bent down over her work, as if she found a fascination in the silent gymnastics of her fingers. When he spoke to her she lifted her head for a moment, revealing the almost expressionless placidity of her small, white face.

He would address her with his pencil poised over the ruled paper, his forehead wrinkled in a heavy frown, perplexed by some elusive chord sequence.

"Mary, what in the name of heaven are you doing?"

"You know well enough, Paul."

"By God, you're looking older every day!"

"That's not unnatural, is it, Paul?"

"What the devil did I marry you for?"

She ceased to look at him, and bent her brown eyes to her work once more.

"I tell you, Mary, I'd give ten years of my life for an adequate answer to that question! What sort of a woman are you for me? Yes, and what do you find in *me*? You don't enter into my life; you're as unaware of the intimacies of my brain as my old shoes or my old coat. Tell me this: how in the

name of everything have I managed to live with you all these years?"

His words did not hurt her; she was used to them. They were a part of his eccentricity that in twenty years of intimacy had ceased to be startling. When he spoke in this manner, this irrational and extravagant strain, he seemed willful and boyish to her, too young to be accountable, a child in tirade. A certain maternal tenderness warmed her. Stealing an occasional glance, she saw his animated face, his lifted, sardonic eyebrows, black, like two heavy strokes of a charcoal pencil, his pallid, emotional face, his flexible lips, speaking. He was incorruptibly exuberant and foolish: he was dear to her.

"I think, Mary," he said, "there must have been some abominable and trivial witchery that made you attractive to me. Perhaps you once had a way of making your lips smile, or a trifling expression in your eyes, or an inconsiderate wave to your hair that touched my imagination like a spark. I assure you of this, my woman: I haven't an idea of what it was now. I must have been a more prodigious ass than ordinary when I was young!"

Staring at her, he forgot her; the symbols of sounds materialized before his eyes like visions; he bent over the paper on the table and wrote down upon it a new measure of his music. The symphony took shape, growing under his fastidiousness like a cathedral, intricate and imposing, luminous, Gothic, lovely. His assurance had never been more profound, his faith that even a pedant would feel the pulse of inspiration that beat boundingly in these interwoven themes. As he composed the final measures of the last movement, a *rondo* in form, he dreamed of the opening performance, seeing the choirs of the orchestra before him, the mingled tones of their instruments rising and falling in his ears like the grand calling of a single celestial voice. He sent the manuscript to the conductor of a celebrated orchestra; in three weeks it was returned to him without comment.

The Eleventh Symphony of Paul Braun was rejected! The astounding folly of this fact reacted on his brain like a curious drug, a distorting alkaloid. His anger turned not only upon the obtuseness of those who had examined his work, but upon himself for the useless persistence that had given him the skill to compose it, for the ruinous steadfastness that had kept him through half a lifetime to a lofty concept of the beautiful. In an ironic rage he played the harlequin with his ideals; he composed the Tuba Symphony. He wrote with an astonishing and unusual speed. At night, after he had gone to bed, Mary gathered together the scattered sheets of his manuscript, strewn over the floor like leaves dropped from an autumnal tree, and piled them compactly on his table.

The sheaf of these pages grew larger each day.

II

THE organization that had rejected his Eleventh Symphony accepted for performance this Rabelaisian piece for the tubas. Braun sent it to them as a final thrust of his irony; the note that requested him to call and arrange for the details of presentation amazed him at first and moved him finally to disquieting outbursts of laughter. Later he discovered the accident that had brought about its acceptance.

It was a matter of political reorganization within the orchestra. Levine, the conductor, was still in his place, but an important phase of his authority had passed into other hands. For more than fifteen years the orchestra had been subsidized by an ancient devotee named Siebert. The æsthetic sensibilities of the old man had congealed a couple of decades before; he was quite without an ear for the new and daring in music. Levine, a capable conductor, and a learned pedant, gave only those compositions that adhered to the "classical" form. Old Siebert died; his rights passed into the hands of his son. The young man was a dilettante of

some discernment, without his father's prejudices. Shortly before the Tuba Symphony was mailed to the orchestra, he upset the old order by assuming with Levine a joint examination of every manuscript offered to their organization. To young Siebert, then, belongs the credit of giving the first orchestral production of a work by Paul Braun.

Braun called on Siebert early one afternoon. In the executive offices of the orchestra he was first confronted with a girl, who took his name back through an inner door. She returned after a moment, smiled, told him that Mr. Siebert was waiting for him. Braun passed through a gate and through the door from which the girl had just emerged.

He found himself in a large, sunny room. One man was seated at a desk, another was standing near him, smoking a cigar. Braun recognized the latter; he was Levine, the conductor. The man at the desk stood up and extended his hand cordially. He had a pale, enthusiastic face, an innocent blue eye, blond, crisp hair. He stepped toward the composer and took his hand.

"Mr. Braun," he said, "it's a great pleasure to know you. Are you acquainted with Mr. Levine?"

Braun and Levine exchanged greetings. The three men sat down. Braun glanced from moment to moment at the conductor, restraining, with each quick scrutiny, his desire to smile sardonically. Levine was extraordinarily suave; his somewhat shiny face was characterized by a faint, inevitable smile, as if in perpetual propitiation. He was nearly bald; close to the back of a glossy, pink head a tuft of black and grey hair straggled about like spears of tough grass. Siebert began the conversation.

"Mr. Braun, this is an extraordinary work you have offered us," he said. "We're immensely desirous of producing it. We'll make almost any reasonable arrangement with you. It will require some reorganization of the orchestra, but that's a minor matter. Is this the first composition you've offered us, Mr. Braun?"

"No, it isn't," said Braun.

"No? May I ask what was the nature of the work you were good enough to let us look at?"

"In the past three years," said Braun, slowly, malevolently, "I've offered you three symphonies, any one of which is a better piece of work than the one you've elected to play."

Siebert met the composer's ironic gaze with his blue, frank eye.

"I'm very surprised at that," he said. "You must forgive us if you can. There's no doubt, in the press of everything that must be put through here, we've been regretfully lax in the examination of manuscripts. That's a thing of the past, I hope. Anything you have, Mr. Braun, is certain to interest us."

Levine looked off into the space of the room and said nothing.

The composer glanced from the conductor to the young man at the desk. He spoke slowly to the latter.

"Siebert," he said, "I'm very glad, for the sake of your orchestra, that you've decided to play my symphony. Your explanation of the other rejections was unnecessary because it was absurdly inadequate. You've had the opportunity of securing from me, in the past, the only music of any moment ever written in this country. But you preferred dead bones to a living body. Well—the orchestra is to be congratulated on its change of policy!"

When he had finished there were several seconds of an embarrassed silence. The young man at the desk coughed a time or two; finally he opened several drawers noisily, pulled out some sheets of white paper, secured a pencil, looked up ingratiatingly at Braun.

"Mr. Braun," he said, "if you would move your chair a little closer we could—"

He plunged precipitously into a business discussion.

III

WHEN Braun left that afternoon the day for the first rehearsal had been ap-

pointed. He came down a flight of dingy marble stairs into the street with an unwonted ease in his spirits. His embattled years seemed vague behind him, like a toiling forgotten after a sleep. He had had his lordly dreams, and now they were marshalled in his mind almost naively, like the visions of a boy before the venture of accomplishment. He had seen himself other than obscure, and the applause of those who could understand had been precious to his fancies. He walked home slowly, giving a substance once more to his old imaginings.

When he came in his wife was preparing his supper. Her pallid face was a little reddened from the steam of cooking. A few moist streaks of her brown hair straggled limply against her neck. She looked at him with a slight expression of concern.

"You're late, Paul," she said. "Didn't you remember that you have three pupils tonight? They're so hard to get—we don't want to lose any. . . ."

He stared at her, smiling incomprehensibly, his lips giving expression to a half-veiled contempt.

"Let them go to the devil!" he exclaimed.

"Paul!"

"For twenty years I've taught music to flappers and boobs that have no more instinct for it than you have. I'll never teach another one in my life. That's done, that's past, that's in limbo, by God!"

He looked at his wife and a brief scowl passed over his countenance like the shadow of a discontent. A few feet distant from him she stood with her white face turned to his own, her brown eyes, from which the years had taken away their lustre, meeting his, her lips parted uncomprehendingly. At this moment she displeased him more than with that superficial irritation that was ordinary. She could not resonate to these moments of his success; she had never sensed the measure of his achievement; her mind was the harbour of trivial hopes, paltry wishes, inconsequent desires. Upon the lightness and

the exultation that had possessed him, over the renewed substance of his nearly forgotten dreams, a heaviness and a depression was superimposed, like a ponderable vapour poured upon the misty levity of his mood. He met his wife's eyes frowning.

Looking at him, Mary apprehended that a favourable turn of fortune had come to him. By some means these curious labours that had taken all his striving were to secure a material realization. She felt glad, but her sense of pleasure was mingled with her frequent emotion of pity, maternal in its quality. Perhaps he was wrong; his whole life seemed to her a pitiable extravagance, the wild game of a child at play. He was not like other men; he was strangely impractical and young. But then, if he were to be a success, much to be wished might come out of it. With a tender and sentimental swiftness her mind traversed a score of difficult years, and dwelt in moments so long gone that their reality was now no more than a pallid but precious wraith; she remembered him then, and the extraordinary tenderness of him, the fragile delicacy of his touch, the ceremonial of his kisses. She thought that disappointment must have made the ensuing change in him. Perhaps, if now he had whatever it was he wanted, they might in a way live again. She had an impulse to stretch out her arm and touch him, and stand on her toes and kiss his cheeks. But she remembered her cooking and she turned to it with a faint thrill.

But she saw little of him in the days immediately following. Indubitably a change had come about in their conditions. Paul had innumerable outside engagements. Once he brought a blond young man home with him, and the two went through the stacks of Paul's old manuscripts. She was surprised to observe the obvious respect with which the young man attended her husband. She experienced a curious bewilderment; she missed the long evenings alone together; she missed his sudden rages and his scathing vituperation. He

seemed unaware of her nearness now; he ignored her.

IV

THE night for the playing of the Tuba Symphony approached. Braun had heard his music in rehearsal and the sardonic strangeness of it enchanted him. He was eager to learn its effect upon that part of the public capable of understanding it. Early on the evening of the performance he was in the hall talking to Siebert. Both men were enthusiastic; Siebert looked at the composer with admiration—his face seemed lighted with a white fire, his black brows cut the pallid surface of his forehead like two streaks of sable.

The auditorium filled rapidly; there was an unusual hum in the air, for the

touched his baton to the desk. A hush like the sudden dying of a passing wind came over the auditorium. The flared ends of a great rank of tubas shifted forward, and a sustained tone marked the beginning of the symphony.

The first movement opened with a dolorous statement of the principal theme voiced in the muted bombardons, to the undulatory accompaniment of the bassoons, bass clarinets, the cor anglais and the celli. It was but seven measures in length, giving way to a three-eighth condemnation of the same material for the muted violins. Here the woodwind and brass, *staccato*, supported it restlessly for fourteen measures, whereat the hearer was plunged at once into fresh lamentations from the tubas. Thus:



curiosity of this symphony had already been noised about. From his box, Braun watched the orchestra come in. The cacophony of tuning began; the strings commenced their empty scraping of the fifths, the brasses slid across the octave in a parody of the chromatic, the flutes executed obscure coloratura, the lower-pitched woodwinds manœuvred scales grotesquely. Braun's eyes glistened, his lips parted and his white teeth glittered nacreously, he drew in short breaths as if to taste a savour in the air.

A short, awkward man, with a polished bald head, came upon the stage and took his place with the first violins; the audience clapped; it was the concertmeister. A moment later Levine walked out upon the stage, bowed to the applause, turned to his orchestra and

At the end of the first movement there was considerable applause; but Braun, looking about him at the audience, saw many puzzled faces; there was a quality sinister and tantalizing in these parodied themes, the beautiful vested in the grotesque. But the gargantuan outburst of the third movement convinced every dilettante in the place of the sheer orchestral brilliance of this symphony; at its conclusion Levine bowed repeatedly to the clapping. Braun sat with his white countenance staring out on the enthused faces, his pulses beating swiftly. He did not hear Siebert and his companion when they entered the box; he turned only when the young man spoke to him.

Siebert was accompanied by a young woman. The composer regarded her a moment and then stood up from his

chair. She was smiling at him, looking fully into his face as if he were a page to be read, her head tilted back a little, her body poised forward at a slight inclination. Young Siebert stepped a pace or two toward Braun and made her known to him.

"Mr. Braun, my cousin, Miss Dunlap," he said. "Laura is quite carried away, like the rest of us, by your music. Old Levine is doing well enough, don't you think—although it probably hurts him."

The girl put out her hand; he took it. "I could hardly persuade George to bring me here," she said.

Siebert looked at her reproachfully; he protested.

"That's the way you repay me!" he exclaimed. "Yet I was only doing my duty—a hundred people have asked me tonight if the composer were in the house; they wanted to meet him. I've got to protect Mr. Braun—there are too many enthusiasts . . ."

Braun laughed, smiled at Siebert, smiled at the woman.

"But Siebert," he admonished, "there are instances when your zeal can carry you too far!"

The girl turned triumphantly to her cousin.

"Ha!" she cried, "you see how very neatly you're let down a peg or two, young man?"

Levine had returned to begin the fourth movement; Siebert stepped back a pace.

"I must rejoin my party," he said.

"But you'll stay here and listen to the fourth movement?" Braun asked the girl.

"That will be delightful! Of course I will," she said.

Braun drew a chair aside for her; Siebert left them; they both sat down. The bassoons opened the rondo with an ironic and elephantine execution of a swift passage.

V

THE composer watched the girl beside him, forgetting his music in the

scrutiny of her half-turned face. He thought her admirable, alive with loveliness. Her enthusiasm touched her cheeks with color, as if a powder of carmine flowers had been deftly sifted upon them. Her jetty hair swept low across her ears, revealing only the tips of them, like pallid buds. She carried her head at a gracile backward tilt, and the curve of her white throat was like the line of a supple bow, drawn back a little. A *crescendo* of sound came out from the orchestra, almost of substance and material; it seemed to enfold him and the woman near him as in a chromatic cloak. His imagination was touched to flame; she appeared a part of his music, the jewel of his sense of beauty at the heart of it, triumphing over the sinister parody, the bitterness of his sarcasm, the gaudy assertion of his irony.

She listened to his music, but her consciousness was more of his eyes upon her. She felt the fascination of his personality; although she was not looking at him, she had before her the clear impress of his face—the flexible lips, the dark, keen eyes, the heavy strokes of his eyebrows. Her senses were alert; she thrilled to the newness and difference of him—he had no little gesture that did not express his different quality. She knew too that he found her pleasant, for in a few moments that had been manifest in his way of looking at her. Her fancy was kindled like a fire and she sensed the intimacy they would be certain to have, a glamorous future, sweeping her up body and mind into the thrill of keen sensations, and the sword-like crossing of glittering thought. She turned to him with a start when he put his hand upon her arm; she saw that the orchestra was no longer playing.

"Did it interest you as much as that?" he asked.

The crowd was standing up; the shuffle of feet and the murmur of voices superseded the sounds of the orchestra; the musicians were moving off the stage.

"Such strange music!" the girl ex-

claimed. "Tell me why you wrote it!"

Braun arose.

"Will you go with me and have a bite to eat?" he asked. "You're right—and the symphony is not in my ordinary vein. I'll confess the whole thing to you while we're at table."

"Delightful! That's delightful!" she cried.

Her smile glowed on her lips like a gem. Wishing to capture her alone, and to avoid Siebert, he hurried her from the box. He waited for her in the foyer; she came out to him wearing a black cloak that revealed flashes of a colored lining and over her jetty hair was a green, sheer scarf. She put her hand through the crook of his arm and they walked out together.

They went to a restaurant and sat down at a table placed against the wall; a waiter hurried away with their order. On the table was a little lamp with a red fringed shade concealing a small taper-shaped electric bulb; it threw a rosy glow over their faces. The room was not wide and on the other side the wall was set with a line of flat mirrors that doubled all the occupants. Looking across, Paul could see their two selves, and the charming profile of the woman seated opposite him.

"Tell me about your music," she said to him.

There was a profound and moving flattery in her interest. At that instant he realized his sense of a deep fitness in these moments, and so it was apparent to him that he was fulfilling old dreams. It was in these terms that he had seen life years before; the writing of music, the pleasure of hearing it performed, the communion with a beautiful woman. At once he thought of his wife; she was in manifest contrast, his reality against what he had hoped for. But he forgot her again in his pleasure with the girl and her nearness. She satisfied his concept of a woman; she should be adorning, the accompaniment to the gracious moments of life, never otherwise than lovely. He looked at Laura; she waited for him to speak.

"Do you know," he asked her, "that

this is the first of my music I've heard performed?"

"But George tells me the orchestra is to play four or five of your symphonies this season."

"Yes, I'm to be given a hearing now; even a publisher is making arrangements to bring out my songs. But that's after a wait as long as the years you've lived."

She shaped her lips into a melancholy smile.

"You've not been happy," she murmured. "But it will be different now!"

"You forget that I still have a wife," he said.

She stared a second, then laughed; the rose-colored light gave her white teeth the glints of rubies.

"I knew you were married; I asked George all about you. You speak as if it were a great misfortune. There are many unhappy men in the world, then!"

"Yes, many, no doubt, although I'm only positive about my own case. Being married has made me an old man; some time it will be the death of me. I've sat across the room from her and in the absorption of writing a dozen measures of music, forgotten her. Then I would look up. Great God! I'd think—this woman is my wife! She is not beautiful, but otherwise; she hasn't a notion of what I'm doing. Why did I marry her? I've asked her that; she will not answer me. I was young, and it seems impossible that she could have been pretty. Perhaps she had a way of opening her eyes, or a certain curve to her mouth, meaningless and signifying nothing, that set me to dreaming. Young men dream and their dreams are their disaster!"

"It wouldn't be discreet for me to sympathize with you," she said.

He smiled again and bent toward her a little.

"I've had no one to ask about you. You aren't married?"

"Oh, no!"

"But you have a history of some sort. Talk about yourself a little!"

"How dreadfully you accuse me of a history! I'm much too young for that

—I'm just a poor girl brought up in the city. And I'm an orphan too—don't sympathize with me because I can't remember either my father or mother. Off and on I live with my aunt and her nephew—George you know—then we quarrel and I go away for a time. Just now we don't speak; I'm living alone."

He listened to her, watching her, and discovering a felicity in the sound of her voice, the movements of her lips as they shaped her words, the little gracious gestures that accompanied her thought. After a time she asked him once more to talk of his music and again the flattery of her interest stirred him with an unused sense of content and fulfillment. He talked to her then about his symphonies, and forgetting her limitations, expounded his entire aesthetic theory. His words were spoken with a progressive enthusiasm; as he talked she grew less attentive to their meaning and more fascinated with the fervor of their delivery. She watched the increasing flush that came like a dawn in the pallor of his cheeks, the quick glances of his dark eyes, the supple response of his features to the emotions he invoked. She felt with him a comradeship that warmed her like a caress.

When he stopped they were both silent for some seconds. Braun stared off into the room like one who sees not corporate realities, but the more distant and immaterial figures of visions. Suddenly he was recalled from his enthusiasm to immediacies; he noticed that they were almost alone in the big dining room.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "They'll be asking us to get out of here in a moment."

The woman followed his glance; she laughed at him in raillery.

"And what a dreadful hour for a married man!" she cried.

Her merriment jarred upon his sensibilities; he made no return. They both got up and the composer held her green scarf in his hands and dropped it lightly over her shoulders; the yielding stuff

floated about her with the intimacy of a mist.

They walked out together and he got a taxi. He gave her street and number to the driver; in the cab he sat near her, but did not touch her. When they stopped he got out and helped her to the pavement; they stood together in the night and he still retained the hand she had given him in alighting.

"I have never met anyone like you," he said. "I must see you many times again."

His face was lifted and the light of a distant arc fell across it like a ghostly ray. She thought he looked touchingly boyish and naïf; he moved her with an unusual tenderness. She softly laughed, pressed his hand, bent a little closer to him.

"This is only the beginning, my Master," she said.

In a moment she had released her hand, run up the steps of the apartment house and was indoors.

VI

BRAUN went back to his home. The rooms were dark when he entered them. His wife was asleep; when he walked into the bedroom and turned on the light he saw the outlines of her figure in the bed and he looked down at her. Her head was turned to the side on the pillow, the short strands of her hair were scattered negligently on either side; a wisp, as if clipped off and nourished no longer, fell wanly over her forehead. Braun saw her stir and turn in the bed. He swiftly shut off the light; he had no wish to talk to her.

The next morning when he arose his breakfast was ready for him. He discovered Mary by the table looking at the morning newspaper. As he entered the room she raised her eyes and fixed them upon him with a deep reproach.

"Why didn't you tell me, Paul!" she exclaimed.

"What are you talking about?"

"They played your music last night

and your name is in the paper this morning”

“Ah!” he cried. He snatched the paper from her hands and discovered the report of his symphony. He found that the reporter was an ignoramus; but that did not matter—with a naïf pleasure he enjoyed the importance of a column devoted to himself. He read it twice and then dropped the paper on the table. His wife had arisen and was placing his breakfast before him; he sat down and began to eat.

She watched him, standing a little behind him. His neglect in the matter of the performance, his assumption that she would not even care to know, was assuredly characteristic; yet it stirred Mary like an awakening. Now their circumstances were indubitably changed; the old days were gone. By some means, she was not fully aware how, Paul had achieved a success, and the hopes he used to confide in her in the early days of their marriage had somehow been realized. As she looked at him she felt some of the secret zest of a plotter; she would connive and intrigue for a restoration; she would scheme to bring back the gracious quality of their intimacy that had been shadowed and obscured in the bitterness of unprofitable years! Her eyes rested upon his head, with the inadequately combed hair ruffled all over it, thick and strong, like a tousled mat of sable. Something in this characteristic disorder touched her to tenderness; responding to an impulse, she put out her hand, her fingers were about to run through the length of his hair, when he stood up abruptly, dropping his napkin to the floor. He went out of the room without looking at her.

Yet she felt herself strong with an adequate patience; she was assured in her power to awaken him with forgotten intimacies.

But she was disappointed that no opportunity came to her that morning, no chance of a beginning; he was busy and she was unable to talk to him. She desired a quiet hour—the evening would be better after all—and then,

whilst he smoked, she would go back to times of which neither had spoken for years. She would speak to him reminiscently, recalling certain moments that had been, asking him if he remembered, this day and that day, a certain second, a certain hour, a thing he had said to her, a reply she had made. She thought the chance might occur that evening. But again she was disappointed, for Paul went out shortly after lunch and he did not return the rest of the day.

He walked to the nearest telephone booth and looked in the book for Laura's number; finding it, he called her. He heard her voice answering him and she recognized his the second he greeted her.

“Don't let's talk now!” she exclaimed. “Come and see me! I'll expect you just as soon as you can get here!”

He hung up the receiver and hurried out of the telephone booth. She expected him, she was waiting for him! He had seen her only once, in the night, and he wondered how she would appear to him in the daylight; he was eager to see her standing with the sun falling over her like a robe of fire. He breathed quickly and he was filled with an immense zest of living. A new fluid, other than the torpid blood he had known, seemed to pass keenly through his veins, a swift, subtle fluid, volatile and pungent. He was as if awakened, newly alive, brought out and made to breathe again from an enchanted and accursed sleep.

VII

At her apartment she had already given instructions to the elevator boy; when he arrived he was taken up immediately. She opened her door to him, took both his hands and drew him in; they faced each other a moment, saying nothing. Her eyes were greatly lustrous; her exuberance astonished him. She stood before him as if from a fresh incarnation, bright and plumaged new from a fabulous pyre. He had found in her the preceding evening a touch at least of a languor, a tint of melancholy, a drooping softness. These

were gone, with not a reminiscent trace.

She spoke to him first.

"You're going to give me the whole afternoon?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed!"

"And the evening, too?"

"I want to!"

"I knew you would. What shall we do this afternoon? I want to go out a little while. Would you like to see my place here first? In a way, it's forbidden ground, you know. My aunt, for instance, is never allowed within these doors!"

She finished on a mock dramatic note, laughed, slipped her hand into his arm, and drew him with her across the room.

"I live here with just a maid," she said. "But this afternoon we're alone, to ourselves. And I do most of my own cooking. I love to cook. Do you want me to cook your supper for you tonight?"

He stopped suddenly, smiling at her, admonishing her.

"The Lord help me!" he exclaimed. "Aren't you going to give me a chance to say anything at all? You've asked me a dozen questions already—and never waited a second to see what I'd have to answer them!"

"Never mind! I've plenty more questions to ask you. I'll make you talk soon enough; I'm going to ask you everything about yourself; you'll be awfully tired of talking. . . . This room we're in is a comfortable place where I sit and read or play the piano, or just sit and do nothing at all."

She took him by the arms and whirled him around in a mechanical pirouette; he envisaged a confused picture of chairs, cushions, lamps, a piano, a half a dozen pictures, a disorderly table with books scattered over it.

"And beyond this room is a dining-room, and back of that a little kitchen, and on the other side of the corridor there are several bedrooms. We don't want to see them now, do we? Wait till I get my wraps on!"

In the instant she had gone; a perfume of her lingered in the air where

she had been like a fragrant ghost. Braun laughed: her exuberant mood made him joyous. He looked about the room and at last crossed over to the piano. The brightly polished keys attracted him, and seating himself before them he began to play; he played extempore variations on some of his more favourite themes, not regarding his hands, his head backward tilted a trifle, a half-formed smile parting his lips, in an ease and content of being so rare to his experience that he seemed almost in the happy power of a drug. As he sat before the piano Laura returned to the room; she came in softly and stood near him, but for a time he was not aware of her. Then suddenly he knew that she was there; his hands dropped from the keys, he turned and found her smiling down at him.

"I disturbed you at your orisons!" she said.

"Not so serious as that—but at a good piano, anyway. Do you play it?"

"Not for you to hear! Shall we go now? Shall we go out a while?"

He stood up and they walked toward the door together.

"Do you know what I want to do this afternoon?" she asked. "Not go anywhere, especially, but just walk a little while in the crowds. Do you mind?"

"No, indeed!"

All her desires found him complacent. Their environment seemed a trivial concern to him; he drew his content from his nearness to her, the quality of her being that made its appeal to him in the manner of a caress, that he could feel anywhere, alone with her or in crowds.

They passed out into the corridor, Braun helped her to step into the elevator, and she took his arm when they walked from the cage into the lobby. In a moment they were outdoors in the street. It was a transparent autumn day, brilliant with sunlight; Braun breathed in fully, seeming to withdraw a buoyance from the keen, clear air.

"It's good to be with you," said Laura. "And do you think I've been

too flippant this afternoon? Forgive me for that! I was only happy to have you come!"

Her glowing face was turned to the side to his, and the fluctuant colour of her cheeks seemed the reflected glow of an inner flame, rising and falling. He met her eyes with his own, revealing an expression of reproach.

"Do you want me to forgive you for making me content?"

She did not answer him; she gave him her thanks in an illuminating smile. For a time they walked along without speaking, and curiously enough feeling the sense of complete intimacy that makes such silent moments not an embarrassment, but a communion. The streets were crowded and clamorous; in the sunlight they had a holiday manner. Laura watched the faces of all they passed. The motives and purposes of the crowd seemed fully revealed to her today; there remained only the mystery of an occasional threatening face, threading through the others like a sinister drift piece afloat inscrutably in a clear stream. But if the aims of the crowd today appeared paltry and inconsequent, she none the less found a pleasure in being there; the quality to fascinate her was the combined impress upon her of the many lives, the assurance of vitality, to which her own exuberant zest of living responded. She turned now to look at the composer; he was walking with his head thrown back a little, his eyes straight in front, as if he saw something that engrossed him on the line of a distant horizon, over the heads of all the people. She spoke to him.

"Does any of this ever go into your music?"

He turned to her at once, questioning.

"Into my music? What?"

"I mean, do you try to paint a picture, ever? Streets, men and women, clatter and bang?"

"No. So far as I'm concerned that can't be done with music. I suppose, with sufficient cleverness, one might get the effect of a Klaxon horn out of the

orchestra, and the strings could give a wail like a crying child, or the tympani could imitate hoof-beats. But if these effects have anything to do with a piece of orchestral music I can't see but what a real Klaxon, and a genuine baby to be pinched at the proper second wouldn't have a considerable advantage of reality."

He laughed a little and she laughed with him.

"Music, to me," he said, "is no more than organized sound to which I feel a certain response. It may perhaps express a mood insofar as I am more responsive to certain sounds in certain moods. In that fashion the life of a man who writes music may vaguely be shadowed out in his compositions; that is, his way of living would give him certain predominant moods. I've never thought much about that—perhaps it's even more negligible than it seems. In approaching art, one goes into a different life. Last night I told you that so far as I conceived it, music was essentially unreal. In its best form it is not concerned with the corporate world."

He extended his hand and made with it an inclusive gesture.

"So far as I know," he said, "these people, a crowd like this, have never had any effect upon my compositions. No authentic effect, no interpretative effect anyway. I don't know anything about these people; I don't understand them."

As he spoke she watched his face, the remote expression of his eyes, the almost scornful curve of his moving lips. He was, manifestly, immensely separated and aloof; his disjunction from the usual current of living stirred her; she drew a little closer to him. He seemed now more forcibly a personality for her own exploiting, in that others had so little share in him.

At last, at her suggestion, they turned back, and silent again they came once more to her apartment. When they were in the rooms again, and she had dropped on a convenient chair the bright little coat she had been wearing, her loquacity returned to her like a sudden cascade.

"See, it's getting dark," she said. "It's time we cooked supper. What shall we have? Shall I manufacture you a patent dish of my own?"

"Will it be safe?"

"Ah! You mistrust me, don't you? Didn't I tell you I love to cook? I can, too; you'll see!"

She took his arm and drew him with her through the dining-room, into the little kitchen. She turned on the light and opened the door of the ice-box, stooping to her inspection.

"I'll make you some of my special stuffed peppers," she said.

She tied an apron about her and carried dishes to the kitchen table. She insisted that he must help her and made him take off his coat. She gave him large green peppers; demonstrated the method of cutting off the tops, gouging out the seeds. He watched her shred up veal very fine and drop it in a pan of hot butter, whilst the peppers were boiling in salted water. He predicted that the peppers would collapse and shrivel up; she laughed at him when he was proven wrong. With a large cake of cheese in his hand, she showed him how to run it over a grater until it had crumbled almost to a powder. He saw her mix the cheese with tomatoes, for a sauce, and she made him privy to the secrets of seasoning it with red pepper, curry, alspice, paprika. The smells of cooking moved through the kitchen like an extraordinary aroma. As the girl pushed the pans about on the stove the heat flushed her cheeks warmly; Braun moved rapidly aside, from place to place, to keep out of her way; his amusement was very great.

When they sat down at the table she produced a bottle of wine and they drank to each other a dozen times. As many times the incredible fact that he had met her only the night before stood out in Braun's mind; it seemed untrue and impossible; he refused to consider it. But at the same time he understood that he did not fully know her, had with no adequacy plumbed her possibilities; they were, indeed, only on the threshold. This new experience of a

wholly absorbing human being gave him almost a new life; he lived again. At a certain point his drab and disappointing life had stopped, as if from a death, a quick, keen death like that of a sword thrust, and in an instant, remembering the only existence only, he was in the new, pagan, glamorous, chromatic. He looked at his companion as opposite him she gave him her smile like a queen her gifts. He knew that the days that had been were indubitably gone, dissolved and passed like risen mists, and that his tomorrows would take their colour, their flavour, their glamour from her figure, moving luminously through them.

VIII

WHEN they finished their supper she asked him to play for her. They walked out of the dining-room together, and he took his place before the piano. She did not light the lights; a diffused glow came into the room from the streets like the vague flush of a yellow and unreal dawn; he began to play.

He played quietly and she stood near him, a little behind him; as he swayed back his head almost touched her breast. Again he played improvisations on themes that were dear to him and the curious music made the only sound that stirred in the room. It moved and vibrated in the dusk almost like a living spirit; the man from whose hands it was created, and the woman who listened were subordinate to its immediate mastery. He stopped playing; the sound in the room was gone; he turned around slowly and found her very close to him.

Her face above him was a dim whiteness, indistinct, pallid, lovely. The pile of her black hair was a shadow above it. She was motionless, taller it seemed, slender, shadowy. The silence of the room was filled with the potentiality of speech, as if voices would somewhere begin to talk in it, saying words caressing and sweet. The dimness was a mystery, the woman close to him was yet immensely separated, for somehow he lacked the power to lift up his hand

and let it touch her. She had then the immateriality of a ghost, tantalizing and remote.

His mood changed; she was again real. He saw her hand at the side of her dress like a white flower suspended in the air; he raised his own and touched it. Her fingers closed over his hand; a warmth from the pressure suffused through his veins and bounded in his pulses. In a moment she had come out of the dusk, out of the dim standing in front of him, to the intimacy of the bench beside him. Her arms circled his neck in a charmed ring; his hands were on her white cheeks, the ends of his fingers thrust up into the edges of her jetty hair. He drew her face to his own and kissed her.

He kissed her lips and her cheeks, the white column of her neck and her closed eyes; he took her two hands and pressed his lips to them. Then, his head inclined a little backward, he began to laugh, and the sound was resonated from the walls of the room to a choir of swift cackination.

"Have I caught it?" he exclaimed. "Romantic love! Am I going to go through all the symptoms, all the foolishness, the fluff and flummery, sweet-heart? You've made me young again!"

She was laughing with him now; the overtones of her laugh were resonated with his own.

"Does it terrify you, dear?" she asked. "Does it make you very much afraid?"

"Yes, what special kind of a fool will you make me? I've still a little shame left; you'll take that from me presently. And I was content to be your musician!"

"Aren't you glad?"

"Oh, damn it . . . yes, I'm glad!"

He kissed her again; she broke out of his embrace and bounded to her feet; she ran behind him and rumbled up his hair with her quick fingers.

"This is only the beginning, my Master!" she cried, her voice like an echo.

He wheeled about to the piano, and pressing down the pedal loosed a cacaphony of dissonant chords, progressing

from base to treble; intervals of seconds, sevenths, ninths, empty chords of the tonic, fifth and octave, without a mode determining third. The clamour was sudden and immense; it continued until Laura bent over him, drew back his head, and he forgot to play in kissing her.

She was greatly delighted and her enthusiasm gave her eyes a lustrous fullness and burned in spots of red on her cheeks. She had made, she knew, a fabulous capture; she had immeshed a genius in her charm. Her pride was revealed in the tenderness of her caresses, the lingering touch of her fingers on his hand, the breath quickly drawn in and expelled. No barrier, no obstruction, no restraint appeared in her vision to limit him from her possession. And her abounding spirits made the moment adequate to her; she had no need to dream.

For him the years seemed to have dropped off his shoulders like a released burden. Again and again he had the conviction of a rejuvenescence that made of his blood a fresh fluid, heady and swift, beating a new pulse. He suddenly saw his sophistication false, and his philosophies wrong. Life, that he had believed implacable and malevolent, had dropped its mask of harshness, revealing lineaments gracious and glittering. He saw himself the object of a miracle; his sense of wonder was evoked like a dim and fragrant flower.

Going home that night, he had reached the house and was inside the door before he thought of his wife, Mary. His wife! . . . the name seemed an anachronism, something out of the distraught days of a past incarnation, and the woman herself—an impossibility! He shrugged his shoulders; he laughed; he refused to believe in her. He went to bed incredulous of her nearness.

IX

DURING the day alone Mary had had the moments in which to further her dreams. She had known a day of caressing content; to dream was a nearly

forgotten happiness. Her visions were a luxury almost voluptuous; she indulged them like a pagan. It seemed to her there was a luminous word, like the open-sesame of necromancy, a magic few syllables that could evoke the moments that had been and long discarded gallantries; a word that she could speak to him to illumine and reclaim his memories. Perhaps she could say it the next day; perhaps the day no later than the one that followed. She went to bed at last and fell into a calm sleep.

But it appeared impossible to get the quiet moment alone with him. A month before, and that would have been easy. Night after night she had sat in the same room with him, whilst he laboriously wrote down his music. But something engrossed him now. He was seldom at home. He came back late at night, sometimes only a few hours before the dawn, after she had gone to bed, tired with waiting for him past a reasonable hour. Each day he hurried away, sometimes very soon after breakfast. She thought at first that business arrangements kept him so occupied.

But finally that scarcely seemed credible. Moreover, watching his face in the few moments she had with him she could never fail to find an elation there. He seemed unaware that she waited upon him and served him; he was like a fourth dimensional being, removed, remote. He scarcely spoke a sentence to her; he never deluged her with his old abuse; he ignored her. He went about with this light in his countenance, this lifted head, set with glowing eyes. At first she was glad to see him so, for she thought him happy through his emancipation; then, finally, his face troubled her.

The exultation he betrayed grew inimical to her cherished hopes. She did not comprehend the reason, yet more and more it seemed an enthusiasm in him that opposed her, that implacably stood betwixt him and her precious dreams, an antagonist, a barrier. When she found him sitting at the table, look-

ing across the room as if through miraculously transparent walls a vista to him alone visible was revealed, her reaction was that of an inevitable depression. Unfathomably something opposed itself to debase her hopes, something obtruded into her desires like a shadow.

For more than a month she waited on an opportunity that seemed to grow not nearer but the more remote. Now her calm and content were with her no longer; she was deeply troubled. She groped as in an utter dark to discover whatever might be her antagonist; almost as a corporate thing she could feel its presence, hear the breathing of it, but touch it with her eager hands and learn its quality, never.

X

ONE morning, after Paul had eaten his silent breakfast, he went into the room he used as a work place. She could hear him moving about there, she could hear the creak of his chair as he dropped into it from time to time; she wondered if he were writing again. At last, as if from an inspiration, she felt that she could now talk to him. She did not know what it was she intended to say: the word was not on her lips. But she went quietly through the hall, opened the door of his room and stepped in softly.

He was sitting at his table, but he was not composing. It seemed that his heaps of manuscripts were untouched; they were piled up neatly as she had placed them, weighted down by a picturesque little revolver, whose nacre handle, touched by a finger of sunlight, gleamed like a huge ruby. He sat at the table with his head turned to the window, his lips parted, his profile pale and enthused. Like a stab of a sharp blade, the sight of his exalted face sent a throbbing pain to her heart. He did not turn at her entrance; he showed no sign of her presence.

"Paul!" she exclaimed.

Still he was immobile; his face was only half revealed to her.

"Paul!" she cried again. "What is it?"

He turned now and looked at her, although the light in his eyes was so remote she doubted that he saw her.

She put out her hands a little, and the restraint of her gesture made it one of indefinite appeal.

"I've watched you!" she cried. "I've seen that you're happy! I want to share your happiness with you, Paul. Your face looks like it did when we first knew each other . . . do you remember? You look years and years younger! You look like you did years ago; do you remember, Paul? If you're happy, let me be happy with you!"

She never knew that this would be so hard to say, that it would wrench her so, like the clutch of rude hands crushing something of her being immensely keen to hurt, inordinately sensitive.

He listened to her as she spoke; he stared at her when she had finished, and for a dozen slow seconds no change came in his face. Then she heard an incredible sound: it beat upon her ears malignly, dreadfully, horribly; for an instant she was incredulous of it as of something monstrous and fabulous, as of something unreal and impossible: he was laughing! He was looking at her and laughing, she could see the cachinnous rise and fall of his shoulders, the convulsive movements of his breast. For a moment she regarded his appalling mirth, then, as one possessed of a sheer and overwhelming fear, a pure, pulsing terror, as one fleeing from the vision of something monstrous and unspeakable, she flung open the door and ran from the room. She ran to the other end of the flat, back to the kitchen, and there, her hands clutched at the edges of her dress, her eyes opened widely, she listened, afraid that those sounds had come with her, like pursuing wraiths.

For many moments she stood motionless, seeming not to breathe. Then an immense and sudden weariness possessed her, as if the accumulated travail of all her life had come upon her with an instant exhaustion. She sat down

quickly in a chair, her arms dropped across her lap, her head drooped like a wilted flower. She was as motionless as something carven, as a being spelled to immobility by an inimical magic.

She had few thoughts at this time; her mind was as if sponged clean in an erasure depriving her of all hope, all memories, even all pain. Her sense was that of having come out of a tempestuous conflict, defeated, borne down by forces immeasurably too great for her opposing strength, by forces whose very nature and quality she could not fathom, yet left somehow still alive.

She was aroused at last by the sound of Braun's footsteps moving about in the hall. A moment later she heard the door of the outer corridor close: he had gone. In an instant she stood up. Somehow it seemed that he could not go this time unregarded; she felt, as by an urge against which there was no possibility of denial, that she must know where he went, what it was he secretly found to illumine his face and remove him from her with a finality that appeared in this moment as utter as death. She ran into her room and found a hat and coat; a moment later she was outdoors, and ahead of her she saw the composer, walking rapidly, with a manifest buoyance.

XI

SHE followed him along all the streets through which he passed. He never turned around; he seemed too eager for his goal for that; she would have been undiscovered had she trailed only a step behind his heels. She saw him stop at last before an apartment house, and as he was about to go in she observed a woman come out to him.

In an instant she understood and all that had been cloaked in a concealing mist was now clear as by a white and merciless light. She walked forward a few more paces; she was close enough now to see the face of the girl whom he greeted.

The quality of that face brought back to her the immense weariness, the utter

enervation, she had known an hour before. It was young and beautiful and the exuberance of youth glowed there like a thing beyond harm and defeat. The charm of this girl seemed to arm her magnificently, like an investiture of shining steel; in her appalling youngness she could never be daunted, nothing could assail her; she possessed that which for Mary was unrecoverable, lost somewhere and dishonoured in the dust of irrevocable years.

Mary turned and walked back the way she had come; there was no turmoil in her spirits, but rather a waiting calm, resultant of her sense of utter vanquishment. But as she drew near a certain terror of going in came to her; she passed by until she came to a public square. Here she found a bench and sat down.

A tree thrust out its branches above her; black and nearly denuded, they seemed the gnarled arms of some antique monster. The shouts of children, shrill and high, made the air constantly palpitant; she did not hear them. A man walked past her slowly, looking at her, a baby in a passing coach reached ineffectual arms out to her; she did not see them. She must have remained almost without thought in her mind for several hours; the sun was red and low as she stood up. She walked slowly through the square, and the fallen leaves, dried out and brilliant, crackled like cold snow under her tread. A child in a headlong rush collided with her; she paused mechanically until the small scrambling organism disengaged itself from her skirts. This time she went home.

The rooms were silent when she entered; at once she perceived a certain disorder in them. It puzzled her at first; things were surely not as she had left them. She went into the bedroom and saw that the bureau drawers had been pulled out and over the chairs and bed was a litter of clothing. This was incomprehensible and she stood by the bed, lifted a necktie from the cover, dropped it back again, and looked around the room as if she expected to

find the author of this turmoil concealed somewhere about the four walls. But no one was there; in the cubic smallness of the chamber she was alone, and the only sound that reached her ears was the sibilant noise of her own breathing.

She went out of the bedroom, seeking disclosures in other rooms. She came to the composer's study and walked in. She stopped at the door and stared at the big table at which, for years, she had seen him work. The table was startlingly strange and for a second she gazed at it uncomprehendingly; then, like an instant divination, she perceived that its nudity astonished her, the table was bare, the heaps of manuscript were gone. Only a couple of discarded papers lay on the bare top and she walked over and fingered them.

One was a written sheet, and as she crumpled it between her fingers it startled her to see, suddenly, that this was a letter addressed to her. She read it, and somehow it did not surprise her; no other expectation had been in her mind. Paul had come back while she was gone and when he had not found her he had written to her. He must have taken a suitcase full of things away with him; now he was gone.

It seemed impossible for her to leave the table. She dropped his careless note, the note that seemed to dismiss her like the casual good-bye of friends at parting, and picked up the other papers he had left behind him. They were sheets of manuscript, blank pages of ruled paper, soiled scraps with notes upon them. She found herself looking at one of them, a song he must have begun not many days before and then abandoned. Only a few measures were written. She saw a dedication at the top of it. She read the name: Laura Dunlap.

She understood at once; her surety was without question. Laura Dunlap! Laura Dunlap! She repeated the name, saying it aloud and hearing the echo of it in the empty room. Laura Dunlap! This was the one; this was her name! But there seemed no witchery in the

name . . . it did not suggest an allure . . .

She found herself slipping from the table; she dropped down to the floor; crumpled there, she began to sob. The tears smarted her eyes and she felt them drop on her hands. And somehow they brought a return of her courage, or a desperation with the effect of courage. She stood up and searched in her dress for her handkerchief.

Laura Dunlap . . . after all, this was only a girl who perhaps did not know that Paul had a wife. She was young, but a human being. What had happened was impossible; it must not be permitted a possibility. Her breath came faster, she ran out of the room swiftly. She hurried to the bathroom and bathed her hot eyes with cold water. She ran her fingers deftly along her hair, tucking up the escaped strands that touched her moist cheeks like wilted spears of grass. Constantly it comforted her to think that Laura Dunlap, young it was true, was a human being; she must know something of compassion, something of pity, even something of despair!

She hurried from the house and walked over the streets through which she had come earlier that day. Braun was not in front of her now and it seemed to her that she alone occupied all the long thoroughfare, that all other living things had gone out of life, abandoning her to the terror of herself, the terror of no companionship, no human intercourse, the terror of great possible winds coming out of the illimitable skies, of spaces endless and without goals, of distances remote and incalculable. Men and women passed her, brushed against her in passing, and she was unaware of them. She hurried faster, holding one hand clenched against her breast.

She found the apartment house and went up the steps. A boy was at the elevator.

"Take me up to Miss Dunlap's apartment," she said. "You needn't call her; I'm expected."

The boy hesitated a moment, and

then permitted her to enter the cage. In a moment he had stopped and she stepped out on an upper floor. There were several doors in the corridor; she presently found the name-plate she sought. She did not ring, but tried the knob and the door responded to her push. As it opened, the playing of a piano, boisterous and loud, smote her ears in a rush of sound and seemed to push her back an instant, like the thrust of sudden hands.

She was in a little inner hall and she hurried through it to the room from which issued the music. She passed through another door; she was within a large room lit now, in the twilight, by a hanging dome; the two were there, Braun and the girl.

XII

THE girl was standing behind him whilst he played upon the piano in abandoned enthusiasm. It was she who perceived Mary's entrance. She uttered a little cry and clutched the shoulders of the performer. Braun stopped instantly and wheeled about on the stool. He stared at his wife.

He was off the stool and upon his feet.

"The devil!" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

She was just within the door and the light gilded her lifted face, throwing small shadows into the wrinkles about her eyes, the small lines drooping from her mouth, revealing hollows in her cheeks. She found no word to speak; she looked at Braun; she looked at the girl that stood behind him.

The girl was standing motionless, engauled by the yellow light, bright, fluctuant carmine glowing on her cheeks, a faint line of nacreous teeth visible between the cleft of her parted, full lips. Mary no longer looked at the composer, but only at her antagonist. The pleading she had come to do seemed now the outre purpose of a nightmare. Once more, more intimately than before, the abounding youth of this woman was made manifest to her in a dreadful

comprehension, her unconquerable and undefeatable youth, her youth so exuberant that it flowed out of herself like a golden stream and gave its quality to the man beside her, making him also young. The years she had lived seemed each of them a palpable weight, chaining her to the spot upon which she stood, fixing her to that place forever, making supremely impossible the step that would carry her between them.

Then at the very climax of her despair a sardonic comfort came into her mind. The years would take her great possession from this girl, too, the unregarding years would steal it from her. And suddenly she was furious with an immense impatience—years! Now, at once, something must seize it from her on the instant! With a blind fury of desire, with a feral urge to accomplish in a moment of time that which would be done too slowly by the heavy-footed years, she seethed with a tigerish impulse to run at this gilded girl and rip the youth and loveliness from her face, as if it were a garment to be snatched away. For an instant she was poised forward, her hands pushed out a little, like a cat set for a spring. Her lips and tongue were dry; she could not speak.

And then her arms dropped down flexed, relaxed; her despair returned to her like an overmastering wave, thrown back only once from a crumbling rock. Again she was inundated with the salt and bitter knowledge of her own futility, her helplessness, her implacable defeat. Again she saw Braun and the girl standing close to each other in their unassailable zest and assurance. And suddenly her eyes would not bear this picture any longer, she closed them a second, she turned her head, she found herself running from the room. Someone called after her; she did not distinguish the words that were spoken.

She reached the outer corridor and mechanically summoned the elevator to take her below. She fled from the building in a panic fear, as if from something monstrous and intolerable. For a

square or two she ran along the alien streets like one pursued.

XIII

Now the stress of her emotions lifted; her nerves flexed in an instant, like taut, resilient bands, released. She walked slowly, looking about her a little wonderingly as the crowds passed about her and the sounds of human voices came into her ears. She was immensely apathetic, and all the living stir through which she moved gave to her mind no sense and no significance. She was as if detached, of another substance, no longer the sharer in universal emotions, knowing neither the hope of pleasure nor the immediacy of pain. She came to the place where she lived and noiselessly went indoors.

Once more she was in the familiar rooms, but they had no meaning to her now, their import was vanished like an extinguished light. She walked through them, looking into each one, finding nothing. She stopped at her bedroom, went in, closed the door. Her unregarding feet moved through the litter that encumbered the carpet. She looked at the disordered bed; she was overwhelmingly tired; she knew that she must rest. A window was partly open and she closed it. Standing on her toes, stretching up her arms painfully to reach, she turned the cock of the gas-jet full around. Then she lay down on the bed, her face in the pillow. The room was soundless save for the soft hiss of escaping gas, like the sibilant noise of a spray of water falling on heated iron.

She was undiscovered until the odour of gas, passing out into the hall, became apparent in the flat above. It was traced to its source and a distracted janitor came upon the lifeless woman as she lay in her bed, her face turned in to the pillow, her hands flung out limply. A doctor arrived and said there was nothing to do. The rooms filled with a futile crowd of staring people, investigating, touching things, handling. Several reporters appeared and took

notes; a little stream of expectant men and women trickled in and out of the bedroom; in the hall groups of married women, tenants of the house, collected and talked in low, eager voices, passing from the theme of the dead woman to the exchange of obstetrical confidences.

XIV

It took a day to locate Braun, but he came at last, surprised and exasperated. He stared at the woman who had been his wife, but his emotions were unmoved. She was something immensely remote, whom he had long ceased to find consequent. No reminiscence from the departed years returned to illumine her act and make it comprehensible to him; he did not understand her death. He had a vague notion that it might have been accidental; that seemed in consonance with his ineffectual memory of her. It required three days to see the business to its conclusion, and then he returned to Laura.

She received him with a gentle gravity, whilst her fingers closed about his hand. His accumulated irritations and anger passed from his spirit like a sickness exorcised by a miraculous cure. The warmth of her intimacy, the glow of her nearness, suffused itself through all his senses. He stroked the dark masses of her hair, he drew down her face and felt the soft texture of her cheeks against his own, he kissed her lips. He forgot the travail of his other days; his memories did not reach beyond the moment when he had first seen her. He could never have enough of touching her; she responded to all his caresses.

"How long have I been gone?" he asked. "But it doesn't matter—it seemed an abominable eternity, a damned, endless stretch of time. I was about to break loose. I shall never be away from you again."

They were seated together on a little couch, bright with a flowered cretonne cover. She drew closer to him; she looked up into his face, bent over her

own. She watched his lips as he spoke to her and believed, with a splendid and abounding faith, the assurances that were shaped there, that stirred the air with intimate words, that entered into her ears like palpable caresses.

"And now we can be married!" she exclaimed, softly.

He drew back from her a little, stared a moment, and then broke into a resounding laugh.

"Great God!" he cried. "I can't see what's under my nose! Certainly! I never realized it was possible. I never thought of it!"

He stood up, lifted her with him, held her close.

"I want you for my wife," he said. "When will you marry me?"

"As soon as you say, dear," she murmured.

"Then it needn't be any later than tomorrow," he said.

His precipitancy delighted her and she laughed aloud in a joyous tinkle of sound. She took him to the piano and made him play for her, but he would not play as she wished, not the languorous themes her mood desired, but fingered boisterous chords and great robust runs until the measure of the little room seemed insufficient for the rhythmic surge in the air. Yet after a moment she caught the clamorous spirit of his exultation; it entered into her blood like the essence of antique romance, the glamour of riding men and jousting knights, the glitter of crossing swords in the sunlight, the towered walls of moted castles, the chromatic costumery of departed ages. Her cheeks flamed red, her eyes dilated, her lips parted with expectancy. She bent over the player a moment and then, circling him with her arms, she pulled him back against her breast and pressed her kisses on his lips.

XV

THEY were married as he proposed, and they went away to the mountains and spent a month in glowing intimacy. They lived in a squat little bungalow

hastily rented, where Laura cooked for him and tended upon him with a fine delight. In the evening they sat together on a porch looking down into the dusk slope of a tangled valley. For the first weeks the moon lit this with a phosphorescent pallor, and a great symphony of singing crickets rose up from the briars and grass in endless night-song. The pine woods, scented and aromatic, were close about them and in the darkness the whinnying cries of remote screech-owls came through the night with a touch of melancholy that made them draw closer and smile at each other with assurance.

In the last week they undertook an expedition that kept them away the whole day. They pushed through overgrown paths, came nearly to disaster with concealed hornets' nests, disturbed the lairs of emerald green snakes that glided out and away in noiseless flight, and late in the afternoon reached the top of the highest mountain. They sat down there with a universe of green ridges and brown slopes of scrub oak spread out beneath them like waves of an immobile sea.

"I could write music in a place like this," said Braun.

Then he knew that he wanted to write; he had composed nothing for months. For an instant, in the sudden urge of the moment, he looked about impatiently, as if he expected to find the ruled paper, the materials of composition, there at his hand. But a few minutes later he forgot his desire in the pleasure of their memorable descent from the mountain.

They found a path that turned downward in a great spiral and arm in arm they descended with a long, impetuous stride. They passed a boy carrying a supper pail to some berry-picker near the top and he stopped and stared after them. The crisp night air was blowing in, and it tingled on their faces like a salt spray. Halfway up the adjacent mountain, across an intervening valley that now was dusk and blanketed in grey and purple mists, they saw the lights of a hotel twinkle into being, one

by one, like beacons set in the window of a castle. It was dark when they got to the lower road; they were tired and hungry when they reached their house.

But Braun knew he must go back to the city and write, and Laura acquiesced in his desire. She spoke eloquently of the new symphony he would compose, but he was already inventing the materials of it in his mind and her vague enthusiasms, her meaningless arabesques, annoyed him a little.

Several days later they returned to the city, arriving in the early afternoon. Paul had been silent during the ride in the train, preoccupied with his inspiration. He planned a tone poem, to be composed as a continuous narrative. The thematic material was assembling before his eyes and some of it was ready to commit to paper; he planned something full-voiced, with the initial theme delivered clamorously from the horns, a quick announcement of a second and third theme, and then a grandly executed contrapuntal treatment that would bring into action all the orchestral resources. As soon as they were indoors he sat down at his table and began to work.

The afternoon passed and he was unaware that so many hours had gone over. The room became dusk; he was suddenly conscious of the dimming light. He stood up and walked across the floor to the button switch on the wall; he pressed it and the chamber was illuminated. He turned to go back to his work when Laura entered and stood just inside the door.

She had a big apron tied around her dress; she was deep in the business of preparing his supper. She looked at him, smiling, her head bent backward just a little, the line of her throat touched to an aurine softness by the light overhead, her lips faintly pouted and inviting his kiss. He met her eyes, staring at her a second, vaguely. For a few moments he scarcely saw her.

Then his faculties were released from the spell of his work and he was conscious of her.

"Don't you want to come out and help me, dear?" she asked.

He did not reply at once; something in her aspect puzzled him. There was a lack, a deficiency, a lost quality. He could not understand; he still stared at her.

She crossed the room and put her arms about him; she kissed him.

"Don't look at me so far away!" she exclaimed. "It makes me feel as if I weren't in your world!"

He drew back from her embrace, astonished but comprehending. Her kiss had lacked its old flavour; something of the lustre had departed from the jetty masses of her hair; an indefinable air of springtime had gone out of her being. It seemed to him the period he had known her had left a faint but perceptible impress upon her face and the contours of her person, the face and body that had seemed superior to time. For the first time he understood that passing days, one following another and reaching out into years, might mark and change her.

"Aren't you coming with me?" she asked again.

Her forehead was faintly wrinkled; she searched his eyes with a troubled scrutiny.

And then she seized him tightly with her imprisoning arms, she pressed her kisses upon him, she breathed with his breathing. The thrill of the old delight came up in him again; he returned her kisses; he found her lovely.

XVI

IN six years he composed two tone poems, two symphonies, and half a dozen exquisitely proportioned songs. He was now engaged upon a work that he knew would be his greatest, the supreme effort, the ultimate maturity of all his powers, all his cunning, all his high sense of the beautiful. He sat in the night, writing down the measures of this music with a slender pencil, whittled to a long, sharp point. Now and again, snorting a little, he made an erasure. For a time the material

flowed out upon the paper with at least a certain ease. Then the erasures became more common, each new measure took for its writing down a longer period of time. He struggled for a while, he clutched at his elusive facility, but stood up at last, angry and exasperated. Across the room he saw his wife, looking at him.

"Why the devil don't you do something!" he exclaimed. "Don't sit there looking at me like a gargoyle!"

She said nothing to him, she looked at him with only the reproach of her dark, dolorous eyes.

Braun flung back his head, threw up his arms, and clenched his extended hands in a passionate, appealing gesture.

"Oh, great heavens!" he cried. "Tell me why I married this woman! Tell me what she has in common with me! Tell me why I continue to live with her!"

He turned savagely to his wife.

"Tell me that!" he bellowed.

But still she said nothing to him; she kept her eyes on his face; a tenderness came into her countenance. In some way, by some means she did not understand, he had strayed from her, and the lyric joy of their early months together had been lost in the unhappy years. But lately she was not so grieved, for she had been recalling, bit by bit, brightness by brightness, the glittering moments of their first hours. It seemed incredible that the quality of these could be gone utterly; that was not possible. She would recall them to him, she would wait for the moment when she could talk to him tenderly, bring back to him reminiscences ineffable and forgotten, touch into being, like fingers on a memory-awakening harp, old melodies of their intimacy that would stir him to desire, that would warm him like a flame.

"You can't tell me!" he cried. "It's preposterous: nobody can tell me!"

He returned to the table and sat down before his work, and began to write. For a little while the thoughts of the woman near him interposed as

a vague trouble between his inspiration and its embodiment on paper. But that passed at last, he forgot her inconsequence, her triviality, her meaningless-

ness; the impatience was gone from his blood and once more music appeared upon the paper before him in an easy and illuminated stream.



TRUE NORTH

By T. F. Mitchell

SHE was staying in the country and was delighted with the pigs and chickens and home-made pies. She vowed it was the ideal life. One evening she sat on the porch listening to the bull frogs, the crickets and the hired boy making love to her. Gradually the sky was lighted with a yellow glow. Some one's barn was burning in the distance. She became homesick and cried. It reminded her of Broadway.



RIVALS

By Oscar C. Williams

EVEN the great, beautiful, gold-giving sun
 Cannot show mercy;
 In the dewdrop,
 Thrilling in its little dream,
 He sees a tiny rival for beauty,
 And he takes revenge!



ALL the philosophy of marriage is expressed at a railroad station by the manner in which a husband embraces his wife upon his departure and the manner in which he embraces her upon his return.



A WOMAN is never surprised when a man tells her that he loves her. What surprises her is that he held out so long.



A MAN stops being a child when he marries the first time, and begins again when he marries the second time.

MIRAGE

By Vennette Herron

I

"FIRST of all," claimed the Russian, "she must be beautiful.

An ugly woman is an abnormality—a monstrosity—and ought not to be permitted to live. You laugh? But, I ask you, if a creature created for love is unlovable, what further excuse is there for its existence? There you are!" and Stanislas Oberowski made a gesture with one strong, very white hand, which swept the world clean of ill-favored femininity and left only perfect specimens, garnished and plattered before the eyes of the Epicurean—man.

"Would," his companion wished devoutly, "that some feminist might hear and answer you!"

"Bah! I suppose that since not all are beautiful and since the State will not dispose of them and they lack the courage for suicide, they must fill their time with talk; but the woman who has accomplished greatly is she who has been greatly loved. So it was in the beginning—is now—and ever shall be. It is growing a little late—perhaps I had better send—"

"By no means," interrupted the American. "We are not in haste."

From the curtained alcove, where the two men lounged in comfortably cushioned chairs, with cigarettes and cocktails conveniently placed upon a small table between them, they could look out across the foyer of one of New York's ultra-fashionable hotels, and through broad open doors could gaze into one of its rose-hung, flower-scented and softly shaded dining-rooms and could catch, now and again, the lilt of light music sifting through gilded

grills and banks of palms. A constant flow of diners passed back and forth, bowing and smiling, shadowed and shifting, against the blurred, pink glow of the dining-room, like vari-colored petals a-swirl on a sunset stream.

Oberowski sat silent for a moment, his eyes on the kaleidoscopic whirl of pastel and black. He was a big, rather square, handsome man, in the late thirties—white-skinned and black-bearded, according to his type.

At length he readjusted his monocle, leaned forward slightly, in order to get a better view, and went on:

"To be truly beautiful, also, a woman must have infinite finish. Do you realize how few really finished products one can find on this still so crude and naïf planet? A symphony—a lyric—a tiger—some wine—some women—and sometimes, at exactly the right consistency, a Camembert cheese. At the moment I can think of no others."

Harold Dudley laughed. He was a plump, blond, pink-skinned, well-tubbed and well-fed American, obviously a member of the best clubs, a good sportsman, albeit a trifle heavy, a bachelor—it goes without saying—and a man-about-town. In fact a very self-possessed and presentable young fellow—one who would appear to advantage in almost any group of men, but one who, in comparison with his present host, seemed, in some indescribable way, to be immature. His manners were excellent, but not distinguished. Before the arrogant perfection of the Russian, his worldliness showed a tinge of self-consciousness, his cynicism seemed a bit forced, and when he lifted the monocle, which

dangled by a thin, black thread, against his shining expanse of shirt, there was just a hint of imitation in the act. One somehow could not imagine Harold Dudley riding into battle, with his glass in his eye.

"Your subject," Dudley caught up the conversation, when his mirth had subsided, "is the one eternally interesting. What else do you require in a woman?"

Oberowski continued his category with unabated gravity.

"Above all, she must know how to preserve the glamour of her exquisiteness. She must be as fresh as a flower, but one must never know that she bathes—intensely *soignée*, but one must see naught of the process—the purely artificial toilette, made sometimes for coquetry, after the other is completed, is another thing. She must be immensely intelligent, but her face must never betray it. She must have the carefully cultivated simplicity of a string of matched pearls. Such a woman as I mean is the crowning culmination of the arts of the centuries—but how she is rare! Of course she must not eat."

"Must not eat!" echoed Dudley in amazement. Try as one may, a true aesthete is not made in two generations.

"Mon Dieu, no! She may sip a little wine, if she will—or play with a peach—but literally to eat! To sit down and fill her little mouth with food! *Bifsteck!* Ugh! I should taste it forever after on her tongue." Oberowski shuddered.

"And having found such a paragon," persisted Dudley, "how long could she be content, do you think?"

"About three months, as a rule. An alliance should never outlast the honeymoon."

"Which precludes marriage. Even the proverbial year of trial would be too long for you."

"A year of marriage would not be a trial, but a tribulation—in most cases, that is—but—you have not yet seen—my wife."

There was an unmistakable note of

emotion in Oberowski's pronouncement of the last two words—a frank acknowledgment, not at all inconsistent with his former flippancy. On the contrary, it gave significance and sincerity to all that he had said and served to set Madame Oberowski upon a pinnacle. It was subtle, but genuine, that sudden transition. A connoisseur of sensations and a dealer in emotions, Oberowski did not hesitate to display the last addition to his collection.

"As you know, I am eagerly awaiting the pleasure of my presentation to Madame, your wife."

There was a gleam of amusement in Dudley's eyes, but in the back of his brain, curiosity crouched.

"There are a few rare women," went on Oberowski, caressing the words, as though he rolled an ancient vintage upon his tongue, "who seem to have absorbed all the loveliness of dreams and to radiate it forth again. Natalie has belonged to me for six months—and—" a faint flush crept over his pale, olive cheeks, "she still floats in a mist. We are incurable idealists, we Russians. When we cease to love, it is the very end. Natalie is—well, she is the last of my illusions. In her hands lies the fate of my soul."

Although the features of Oberowski remained impassive, even the lips resting relaxed, Dudley, with his eyes on those of the other man, knew the exact instant that Madame Oberowski appeared in sight, and, even before his host rose, could gauge the crescendo of her approach. It was as though the Russian faced the increasing glow of an oncoming light—but without loss of dignity, or serenity. So interested was Dudley in this phenomenon, that the woman was almost upon them, before he turned his attention to her.

II

SHE was a slender creature of medium height, with close-coiffed, black hair, glossy as a casque of polished jet, magnolia-white skin, and a crimson mouth, like a flower in cream. She

wore ivory satin, simple in line, but supremely sophisticated in finish, and Dudley was immediately reminded of Oberowski's simile of strung pearls.

Natalie's first words were for her husband.

"I am not late?" she pouted charmingly, in English, but with an accent wholly French.

"You can never be late, *chérie*, for time stands still in your absence. May I present to you Monsieur Dudley, the good friend, of whom I have so often spoken?"

Natalie extended her hand for Dudley's kiss and left him thrilled by the conventional contact.

"My husband has told me much of your happy days together in my beloved Paris," she said, with a sigh after the name, as though she would add, "When will I again see my home?"

But she immediately continued with vivacious cordiality:

"I am delighted, Monsieur Dudley, that you could come to us to-night. I so much regretted to be ill and unable to receive you before, or to accept your many, so nice invitations. But you have made time pass pleasantly for Stanislas. That was kind. Poor fellow! I was so *triste* and he was so *ennuyé* with me."

"I hope that you have entirely recovered, Madame?"

"Oh, quite—*merci*. It was only *une neuralgie*. Your climate, I think—and then I was so frightened in crossing."

Again a gleam of sadness brushed her face; but she shrugged it away and, laying her hand lightly upon Dudley's arm, turned toward the dining-room.

Throughout the meal Dudley studied his hostess. She engrossed his attention, indeed, to the limit of courtesy. Not only was she one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen, but there was an elusive fragrance of aloofness and spirituality about her, which was the quintessence of art.

Therein, of course, lay its charm. To minds which are not primitive, the song of a bird may sound sweet, but the intricate masterpiece of a musician en-

thralls. Natalie Oberowski was a sublimated product. Her face was mobile, and yet still—vivacious, and yet impassive. Every possible expression flitted over it, while the features remained composed. She was like a mirror, which reflects everything, while preserving its own smooth surface undisturbed. She made a thousand pretty gestures, which melted one into the other—flowing from one lovely posture to the next, so that the mind of the beholder was forever unable to fix her and was thus kept forever occupied. She was utterly worldly and at the same time ethereal.

As for eating—certainly there was neither awkwardness, nor appearance of toying in her movements. She seemed, indeed, to taste each *plat*, as it was put before her, and sometimes touched her tinted lips to the tip of her champagne glass; but it was impossible to conceive that she fed. She absorbed sustenance, as a flower absorbs dew, and made one feel that it was immediately converted into honey. She remained still cool and sweet, swaying softly in her own ether, long after the diners around about them had grown flushed and fumed with wining. Once she shivered slightly, after an involuntary glance at the next table, where several be-jeweled and be-dizened Jewesses glutted themselves with rich viands; and thereafter she withheld her eyes from straying.

At the first glimpse of her, Dudley envied his friend. At the conclusion of dinner, he hated him. Here was something to which he could never attain. As he had traveled through old civilizations, he had had his eyes opened to one refinement after another in the world-surrounding surge after happiness and pleasure, but here was a dazzling, blinding epitome—the very essence of woman, created for man's enjoyment and glorying in her mission. She was perfection in herself and an apogee in experience. All of his past affairs with women—how they dwindled into insignificance, as he gaped at Natalie! How crude—how almost gross his love-life had been! Even

that little Viennese singer, who had seemed at first so daintily capricious, had wound up by boxing his ears in a public café. Good heavens! How disillusioning they all had been in the end! But this one—ah! Dudley staggered, as he followed in her wake, when they left the dining-room.

They ascended to the small rose and gold salon of the Oberowskis' suite for coffee and liqueurs, and there, after making a few entrancing passes of her slender hands among the cups and tiny glasses—magic movements, which left the two men incomprehensibly, but most deftly served—and after puffing daintily twice or thrice at a scented cigarette in a pearl-banded holder, Natalie excused herself and withdrew to her own apartment, where her maid waited to prepare her for going on to the opera. Dudley had to cling to his corner of the table, to prevent himself from being dragged after her in the undertow of her passing.

Oberowski accompanied his wife to the door and then came eagerly back to his guest, his eyes sparkling enquiry and his voice demanding, with the triumph of the successful love-hunter brandishing a trophy, "Is she not all that I have said?"

And Dudley, with his eyes glued to the door, which shut out sight of the lady, growled an assent. It seemed sacrilege to speak, so steeped was he in the spell of her flower-like fragility.

But Oberowski, frankly enslaved himself, was delighted and flattered by the obvious vanquishment of his friend. Nothing less would have satisfied his vanity. Continual competition kept green the joy of conquering. It gave an extra fillip to the pleasure of possession to torture his friend by talking of his wife, and Oberowski lived for sensation. Also he was as nearly fatuous in his own infatuation as he ever permitted himself to be, and hardly could, if he would, converse of aught but Natalie, while lingering within the perfume of her presence.

Therefore he went on:

"Is she not the loveliest creature you

ever saw? Positively I am amazed and almost afraid of my own constancy. It is too great a risk—such an overwhelming experience. If the price should be commensurate! Ah well! I yielded slowly, but I confess that, in spite of myself, my abandonment is almost absolute. Disenchantment now would be too terrible!"

He paused a moment and then gave himself up to gloating.

"But there seems to be neither flaw, nor finis, to her variety. She is full of fancies—deals out a thousand caprices and delicious coquetries. It has been her whim for several nights past, to have me await her down-stairs some time before dining, so that, after an interval of anticipation, she may descend to me, and may thus seem, each time, to be conferring a fresh favor. It is her gift to make a pretty game of life and love."

The chamber door, being insecurely latched, swung open of its own accord, an instant before Natalie reappeared and both men overheard the final directions of mistress to maid, spoken in a voice of silver sweetness.

"But you must speak the English, stupid Josephine. How else can you make him understand? Do not make such a mistake again, unless you wish me to die. There, child, you need not weep. For tonight, it is nothing. Be sure that everything is put away—and here—give him this. Ah!"

There was a sudden break in the voice, as Natalie became aware that the door was ajar and then it continued smoothly:

"I shall not want you again before one. You may amuse yourself until then, as you will."

The sound of the voice absorbed Dudley at the time, but the words seeped into his brain and dripped back into his consciousness, during a crisis, long after, when he would gladly have forgotten them.

Natalie, wrapped in a cloak of white velvet and ermine, with wide drooping sleeves, looked like an angel with folded wings—an angel with a past, and

with future possibilities, but content, for the present, with her shining state.

After the opera, they drove to Delmonico's for supper, and there, for the further bewitchment of her companions, Natalie consumed a whole hour in eating one perfect strawberry—making of it the most daintily tantalizing and completely maddening process Dudley had ever beheld. That evening was an education for the American.

III

SEVERAL weeks slipped by, during which Dudley saw Natalie almost every day and became daily more enamoured. It was easy enough to make opportunities to see her, for he and Stanislas had been uncommonly congenial a few years back and Natalie herself encouraged a renewal of the old friendship with all possible cordiality. Indeed, although there was no touch of the personal—in spite of his utmost efforts—in her bearing toward Dudley, and although she evaded intimacy by refusing to receive him when alone, still, she seemed almost to seek sight of him, so promptly did she accept all of his suggestions for their triangular excursions, and so frequently was she herself the first to say, with a pretty air of seconding her husband's unspoken wish:

"And you will dine with us tonight, Monsieur Dudley, will you not? Stanislas and I feel so fortunate to have found a friend here in this strange New York."

And always, upon these occasions, she sent the two men down before her, and after keeping them waiting for half an hour or so, made a little ceremony of descending to join them. She kept their imaginations intrigued by innumerable little mysteries and made the most natural movements of every-day life appear miraculous by her manner of gracious condescension. She lived by superlatively artful subterfuge, as though the sun should whisper, "I will rise and set for you," and then should go on rising and setting at his habitual hours.

During these evenings together, Dudley was repeatedly reminded of Oberowski's requirements of a woman, so accurately did Natalie meet each one of them and each time he was amazed afresh at her advance over his own original conception of æstheticism. He understood now why Oberowski had said that a pretty woman should not eat. In this delectable delicacy of decadence lay the acme of appeal and allure, as supreme above prudish perfection as caviar is superior to cabbage.

All of their intervals of waiting for the mistress of their thoughts, the two men occupied with talk of her; and from a stress of extreme envy. Dudley eventually settled into a state of kinship with the Russian. He began to feel that they were banded together for the greater glory and protection of Natalie. Two satellites, swimming in star-dust—to both of them the desire for possession was secondary to the inner urge to keep her ideality intact. But her intrinsic charm was equal to her illusory—she never failed them, and their allegiance grew more and more abject. By being all that they were not, while disapproving of nothing that they were, she subdued them, and the two world-weary, wholly sophisticated men—head-subtle and heart-simple, as men usually are—steeped themselves in her sublimity, like two bedraggled cats drying their fur in the sun.

One evening, some months after the commencement of this strange, and, in a stimulating fashion, strained relationship between them, Oberowski and Dudley sat together over their cocktails and cigarettes, awaiting, as usual, the advent of Natalie. They spoke now and again somewhat desultorily, being both abstracted by anticipation, until, by chance, the talk drifted into a discussion of jewels, after which, having both something of a passion for such things, they became more animated.

"I have an emerald up-stairs," Oberowski volunteered, at length, "which I believe you would enjoy regarding. It belonged originally to—" he lowered his tone to mention a name almost

ostentatiously royal, —and then went on:

"Owing to peculiar conditions brought about by the war, he parted with it not long ago and I bought it of a dealer in Paris, just before coming over. If you will excuse me one moment, I will bring it down. We are unobserved in here."

Suave, self-possessed and smiling, Oberowski left the room. He returned, after an absence of perhaps ten minutes, with his expression unchanged, but with the difference that his features seemed fixed thus in rigidity. His hands were empty and trembled, as he held back the curtains.

Dudley was eager to see the treasure and rose hastily upon the entrance of his host, but started back at sight of his face.

"The jewel—it is not—good God!—is anything wrong?" he exclaimed, startled out of his carefully acquired casualness of manner.

"No, no," Oberowski brushed aside his alarm. "It is safe, but—I beg your pardon—I forgot to bring it down. Something has occurred to make me a little *distracte*. It is no matter. We will look at it another time."

He resumed his seat and, with superb self-control, carried the conversation into other channels.

In a few moments, Natalie appeared and Dudley greeted her with covert anxiety; but with her there seemed to be nothing amiss. She was adorably risqué and yet remote, as usual, and, throughout the dinner, which followed, her abstinence, which had come to seem almost a symbol of her consecration to men's service, was more marked than ever.

Dudley could make nothing of it, but, from that night, Oberowski was a changed man. He preserved a conventional exterior, as was to be expected, but his *savoir-faire* and nonchalance were incredibly shaken. He grew moody, silent, and at times, almost sullen. He fell to shifting uneasily, whenever Natalie was out of sight, and constantly made excuses to return for a

moment to their apartments, whenever she remained behind.

It was impossible for Dudley to avoid speculation, for without any fathomable cause, the whole structure of their hitherto exhilarating intercourse began to sway and totter. Natalie, also became, at length, affected and began visibly to struggle, in her efforts to hold them together—although remaining marvelously serene within herself. Cover it as they might, and did, the equanimity of the three was incomprehensibly shattered.

The subject of the jewel might have slipped the mind of Oberowski altogether, so assiduously did he ignore it; and it was this evasion which puzzled Dudley. Quite naturally, his first thought had been that the emerald had disappeared. But why, if that were the case, did his friend make no attempt to recover it? And what possible excuse would such a mischance offer for the man's changed attitude toward his companions? Thus, bit by bit, the conviction was forced upon Dudley that the Russian connected his wife in some manner with the theft. Consummately absurd as this conclusion appeared, it was the only one, which could account for Oberowski's behavior.

The idea was inconceivably ridiculous—monstrous—crazy! Dudley was furious with the other man for entertaining it, and yet, in spite of himself, he too fell to watching Natalie and was finally obliged to admit that there was something curious and inexplicable in some of her actions.

The fact was that Natalie, having, with unparalleled skill, placed herself high above other women in attractiveness, had to pay the penalty of having her every slightest act stand out vividly—as something conspicuous and significant. She had carried her sex art so far that captivation was a foregone conclusion, and the war, which she waged without ceasing, was for the purpose of preserving unstained her immaculate seductiveness. Commit a crime she might, but be commonplace, she must not. And so long had she

been successful, that a collapse of her sovereignty would be nothing short of a calamity. For their own peace of mind, her adorers were forever striving to keep her steady on her pedestal and torturing themselves in the process. Suspicion of her was intolerable and therefore, once aroused, remained and rankled.

Comically enough, the two men, rivals against each other, became leagued into ever closer comradeship in their guard over the object of their affections; and, what with the efforts of each to restore peace to his own mind, to preserve a decent aspect of indifference before his companion and to keep accurately, at all times, within the precincts of cool and complacent imperturbability, prescribed by his code, each was reduced to a pitiable state of discomfort.

At last Oberowski, who had less dread of the dramatic than the American, came to a decision. He called and found Dudley alone, late one afternoon, in the big, masculine, fire-lighted library of his up-town apartment.

IV

THEIR greetings over, the two men settled into deep chairs before the smoldering logs and smoked in silence for some time, while the day-light slowly faded and the room filled with warm, dusky shadows.

"Is it not a strange thing," Oberowski began at last, "how little one profits by past experience?"

His tone was properly impersonal, but his face glowed sombrely in the flickering fire-light, like that of a priest in a dim cathedral. Oberowski contrived always to look romantically mediæval, and this was no light moment with him.

"Apropos of anything in particular?" contributed Dudley, flicking his ash.

"I was thinking of how many times over even the cleverest of us are fooled by women."

An obvious opening, but Dudley refused it and eventually the Russian

continued. "Very probably, you have noticed, *mon ami*, that I have been—not quite myself of late?"

Dudley nodded. "I saw you were a bit off your feed. Anything I can do for you?"

"Perhaps—yes—I think so—I will come to that. But first, please be frank—have you also, of late, noticed anything peculiar in the habits of—my wife?"

"In her habits? My dear fellow, I protest—"

"Ah, then you have. One more question. Have you, by chance, any influence over her maid?"

"The little Josephine—a pretty puss? Naturally I haven't entirely overlooked her, but 'pon honor—I say, old chap, what in thunder are you driving at?"

"Nothing, except that she runs true to type in every particular except one. Where Natalie is concerned, she can't be bought. I thought that possibly—"

"Evidently you've tried. Is she mixed up in your—problem—or whatever it is?"

"Has not a lady's maid always a part in her mistress' intrigues?"

"Then you do suspect—"

"I do—but I cannot comprehend how you should have guessed it—unless you yourself have seen—"

"No one could help seeing that you watch her—and of course that night you—"

"That I went up after my emerald? Yes, it was then that I discovered—"

"So I assumed, but I could scarcely offer assistance, when you so evidently wished to ignore it. But why should you imagine that your wife, or even the little Josephine—"

"She knows, of course. Only yesterday I caught her in the corridor with a note—but she was obdurate and I would not make a scene."

"But what could be her motive? Utter nonsense! Stanislas—what could have put such a kink into your brain?"

"Her motive, *mon cher*," replied Oberowski with a wry smile, "was doubtless the usual one. There remains but to ascertain the man."

"Do you even know that it was a man?"

"Do I know that he is a man? In Heaven's name, what else could he be? Are you crazy?"

"Well, I don't see why it couldn't have been—but, I say, since you've started, why don't you tell me about it?"

"Such is my intention. As I have said, it was on that night that—by the way, have not you yourself sometimes thought it strange that she should so insist upon shutting us out each evening, just before dinner? You know she does not usually persist in one trick so long."

"I can't say I thought much of that. I remember you said once yourself that it was because—"

There Dudley stuck, for he suddenly remembered the words Natalie had used upon that first evening of their meeting. "How else can you make him understand?" and "Here, give him this." Sentence after sentence came back to him.

"I know," Oberowski caught up the thread. "To think that after all of these years, I should have trusted a woman! It was then that she received him."

"She surely didn't reserve every night for that. She must have—Do get on."

"Attend then! The rooms of our suite are in a straight line, so that, while they are all connected by inner doors, each has also an outer door, opening upon the corridor. The salon comes first—then the chamber occupied by my wife—then her bath and lastly my own room, with its bath beyond."

"My dear fellow, I fail to see—"

"Be patient, *mon ami*, this is all of importance. Upon the occasion, of which we have been speaking, I naturally passed all of the doors, until I reached my own. Judge of my astonishment, when, upon entering, I distinctly heard the voice of a man in my wife's apartment—the doors of the communicating bath being slightly ajar. After an instant of surprise, the thought came to

me that it might be a hair-dresser, or some such person. I did not distinguish the words of the man, but Natalie cried anxiously, 'Please be careful!' and then her outer door shut softly. I should have rushed immediately into the corridor, only that my wife continued to speak and in a tone so peculiar that I—I confess that like all of my countrymen, I am extremely jealous—when I have reason—and I listened."

"Well, and she said?"

"She said—I heard every word—I cannot think, Josephine, what would happen to us, should Monsieur Oberowski ever find this out. But I was so unhappy until you managed to admit him. I did not know what I should when you first came to America. But this friendship with Monsieur Dudley makes it all so much easier."

Both men completely overlooked the indiscretion of this confidence concerning a woman, in the vitality of their interest in her.

Dudley, being the listener, armed at once in her defence. As her champion, he began to feel a virtuous indignation at the stupidity of her husband's charge, quite forgetting that he himself had done some queer speculating about her movements.

"And from that you imagine that your wife was an accomplice? My dear Stanislas, you are raving."

"An accomplice? That is scarcely the usual term—but—"

"It's what you meant. You find a jewel missing and because you overheard—"

"A jewel missing! It is you who are mad!"

"Why—the emerald—was it not—isn't that what the fuss is about?"

"Mon Dieu! What can you have been thinking? This has nothing to do with the emerald."

"But that's what you went after and I supposed—was it there?"

"How should I know? I did not look. What is a paltry trinket compared with—how dared you believe that I could suspect Natalie of—?"

"But what is it then?"

"It is plain enough—she has a lover."

"No!"

Dudley was literally dumfounded. It was an idea which had not entered his head. If this were true, they were both outraged. Had he not resigned himself to passivity and to the worship of her unapproachableness? Had she not thus made a fool of him, too? Brrrr! They must have revenge! These thoughts scurried through Dudley's brain, while he sat slumped in his big chair, looking as plump, blond and helpless as a pat of butter. He tried to protest, although himself convinced, at once, and beyond argument.

"It's impossible. She's always with us—and she's had no opportunity to know—"

"Undoubtedly she has known him a long time. Oh, there is no question. Everything confirms it. I have detected a thousand small signs. One night I even saw the shadow of a man upon the glass above her door, but when I had gained admittance, of course, I found no one there. I have said nothing to her, for I have determined to confront them together."

"He can't be a Frenchman, for don't you remember that she told Josephine that she must learn English?"

"I had not thought of that, but it is true."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" Dudley was all eagerness to begin.

"I have laid a plan."

"Yes?"

"I have told Natalie—before coming here—that tonight you and I will dine with some other gentlemen—*à la stag*,—I believe you call it. I asked if she would mind very much if I left her alone—with us *une grande passion* is an affair of importance—like business with you—we give to it our time and attention. But, ah no, she did not mind. She would rest and Josephine would serve her in her room, should she require anything. The little fox! Of course she will send for him. They

S.S.—3

will think to have hours of happiness.

"I have arranged everything. Early in the evening, we will slip into my rooms in the dark. We may even enter the wardrobe, so that should that chit of a Josephine come spying, she will not see us. When we hear voices, or when it grows late enough so that we know he must have arrived, we will contrive to hide ourselves in her bath. Once he is there, she will undoubtedly set the maid to watching in the corridor and she herself will be absorbed. At the proper moment, we will enter her room. If the door between is locked, one of us—you—must hasten into the corridor and guard the outer door, while I force open the inner one."

"If Josephine should come into the bath?"

"We must silence her."

"And your man?"

"Knows nothing—and has been sent to the opera."

"And when you have them—what then?"

"This." Oberowski drew from his pocket a small automatic revolver.

"Not for her." Dudley had not thought so far and now was shocked.

"For her first, *mon ami*,—but he will not escape!"

"Good God! Such things aren't done here. For him, perhaps—but for her—it will be enough to—why can't you just—Oh Lord—I don't know what we ought to do. It will make a hideous scandal and mess. I won't go on with it—I declare I won't." Dudley presented a pathetic lump of distress.

"But you must. I must have a witness to declare that my cause was just."

"Horsewhip him, if you like, but don't shoot 'em up."

"It appears to me, Monsieur Dudley, that you have small understanding of affairs of honor. In this barbarous country, where one may not call a man out, there is but one thing to do."

Dudley thought hard for an instant and then compromised. "I'll go, if you'll promise not to touch her. After all, you see, she isn't necessarily un-

worthy because she happens to prefer some one else to you," he concluded, taking a distorted pleasure in putting Oberowski on a par with himself.

"Or to you?" sneered the Russian, smarting under Dudley's remark.

Both men were shocked into unbalance by the strain of events. Dudley was horrified at his implication in the matter and yet was wound in the coils by his infatuation. He simply had to see it out and in spite of his own chagrin, he felt that he must protect Natalie, if he could—his temperament not being of the emotional type which demands death as the only solution to a tangle.

Just before they started out, Oberowski once more drew the revolver from his pocket and looked at it sadly.

"It is the only way," he said once more, and then added: "If she is false to me, she must die. Only one thing could be worse. Were she false to herself, I should no longer desire to live."

V

THE first part of Oberowski's program was easily carried into effect. The two gentlemen, not wishing to use a car which might be recognized, took a taxi back to the hotel, entered by a side door, passed hastily through the foyer without encountering anyone of consequence, and at length succeeded in secreting themselves in the capacious closet, attached to the Russian's bedroom, without attracting the slightest attention.

There they spent an exceedingly uncomfortable and somewhat undignified hour, squatting amid the smother of clothing, without venturing even to whisper and without the consolation of smoke. Oberowski had removed the key after locking the door and when, at last, a barely audible sound reached their ears and a line of light showed suddenly below the door, he set his eye to the hole and was rewarded by the sight of Josephine, demure and trim in black silk and white ruffles, who cast

an appraising glance about the chamber, peeped carelessly into the further bath, tried the outer door and, finding it securely fastened, switched off the lights and withdrew, leaving them again in utter darkness.

They endured through another dragging half hour and then, with infinite caution, Oberowski unlocked the closet door and they emerged, with a sense of relief, from their place of concealment.

Dudley's enthusiasm for vengeance had had time to cool and he felt the situation to be growing momentarily more awkward. Indeed, he had an uneasy suspicion that they were being a bit ridiculous; but he saw no way of escape. Oberowski, on the contrary, was stimulated by deviousness. He was thoroughly alert and his excitement, while well controlled, was intense. To him there could be nothing ludicrous in machinations surrounding an affair of the heart. It was a moment of consuming interest, verging on the tragic.

Slowly and silently he led the way to the side of the room nearest Natalie's apartment. At the door of her bath he paused, stooped his ear to the keyhole and listened.

There were certainly voices.

Very gingerly he tried the knob. It gave without a sound and the door swung open.

Fortune favored them. The bathroom was unlighted, the opposite door was closed, and the transom stood open, so that every word, uttered in the room beyond, was distinct, and Natalie was, at that moment, speaking—in French, a tongue which was, of course, perfectly intelligible to the eavesdroppers.

"Josephine," she was saying, "he is very late. Are you sure that you named the hour correctly?"

"But certainly, Madame. He is being stupid."

"Not stupid, Josephine. How can you say such a thing? Think how cleverly he has continually escaped the observation of Monsieur Oberowski. Not once has he been discovered, although of late, it has been so difficult.

I believe that Monsieur suspects something, but a little uncertainty will do no harm."

The two men, poised upon the outer threshold, strained their ears, to lose no word.

"Is it not *drole, ma petite*, how simply the wisest man can be duped? What great babies they all are—fancying we are forever just what they wish us to be! Is it not heavenly that to-night there is no haste?"

She laughed—a delicious lilt of mockery—while in the shadows outside two backs stiffened, two faces set sternly and two highly incensed gentlemen tiptoed further into the bath. . . . A soft knock reached their ears, then the light step of the maid, then the sound of the closing door, and, "At last!" breathed Natalie.

"I am so sorry to be a trifle late," replied a carefully modulated masculine voice—a shade obsequious perhaps, but it behooves a man to be humble when he has given his mistress cause for annoyance. "I was unavoidably detained. Some one wished to speak with me below."

There followed a brief interval of silence and then a shuffling, as though a piece of furniture were being moved—probably Natalie's chaise-longue.

Oberowski's face was grim. By placing a hand upon Dudley's shoulder, he succeeded in balancing himself upon the edge of the marble tub, from which position he could command a view, through the transom, of the far corner of the lighted room.

"Shall I draw the curtains, Madame?" queried Josephine.

"Permit me," said the unknown man and, for an instant, there appeared within the range of Oberowski's vision the shining back of a well-brushed head and a pair of broad shoulders under a correctly cut evening coat. The Russian's fingers curled lovingly about the revolver in his pocket; but his footing was precarious, a slip would be fatal and he decided to descend and wait.

There followed a period during which no one spoke, but during which

all three culprits seemed to be moving about and to be making some small arrangements for their further comfort and satisfaction. Then—

"You may go now, Josephine, and keep guard, as usual, from the alcove at the end of the hall. It is a strange whim of Monsieur Oberowski's—his dislike of seeing me thus—but men must be humored, *n'est ce pas*, Josephine? I believe even our good Monsieur Dudley might feel some chagrin, if he knew. What children they are!" Again that dainty, gurgling chuckle.

She was being sarcastic at their expense! She was laughing at them both, with her lover! Infamous! Dudley was no longer sorry for her. All considerations were scattered. It was a time for action. He took a step forward, but Oberowski's hand held him back. It was not yet—the crucial moment.

"Go, Josephine, I am impatient."

What a tale the words told of long intimacy!

The sounds of the maid's departure were plain. There followed a swishing of Natalie's silks—then stillness—then, "Ah *Delicieux!*" and a soft sigh of utter content.

The silence, which throbbed through the darkness to the watchers, seemed palpitant. To Oberowski, with the memories of many such purple pauses, and to Dudley, wrought almost to madness, this tension of waiting was one of indescribable torment. They both drew breaths so hissing and hard that, had not the occupants of the other room been absorbed, they must have been overheard. Oberowski grasped the handle of the last door which separated him from his wife's Lothario. With his other hand he held his revolver in readiness, his finger on the trigger. Dudley half crouched behind him, his teeth set and his fists clenched.

"Oh," purred Natalie, hesitating a little between the words, as though she stopped to caress—her voice was slightly muffled, too, as a voice might be when issuing from a mouth close

pressed to another's cheek—"sometimes — I am — hongree — just — for this."

It was too much! Oberowski tore open the door and stood blinking in the light.

In the center of the room sat Natalie. Before her was a small, round table heaped high with food—entrées,

salads and meats. Behind her chair stood a waiter in the act of pouring cold beer into her emptied glass.

"And your American bifeck," Natalie cooed, glancing up for a second into the impassive face of the servant and at the same time conveying a generous portion of mashed potato toward her lips, "How it is good!"



THE BETTER SELF

By Elsie McCormick

I PASSED her house last night without going in. It is not that she has ceased to charm me. I admit that she still possesses the lure she had for me in those mad, glad, golden days of not so very long ago. But last night, as I went by her house, I thought of the little girl I had married—of her good-

ness, her simple trust. She would be waiting for me, praying for me perhaps. Feeling that I could not bring sorrow into so sweet a life, I passed the other woman's house without entering. It was much better so.

Besides, she had gone away for the summer.



YOU ARE LIKE FORESTS

By David Morton

YOU are like forests, I am like the sun:
Cool shadows haunt your heart, and secret ways
Lie deep along your soul, where faint winds run
With playful tuning all the summer days.
Dim, rocky paths that seek no certain place
Hide and reveal and hint of what is fair:
A loveliness prefigured in your face,
A mystery foreshadowed in your hair.

All day I burn above you, and all day
I seek the knowledge that is never won,
The treasure that still haunts and hides away;—
Yet, sometimes there are spaces flecked with sun,
And sometimes sudden blossoms wake and start,
Wood-flowers reaching sunward from your heart.



THE TURN OF THE WHEEL

By Grenville Vernon

I

THE child raised her head weakly from the pillow. The effort was too much for her and the head fell again. Her eyelids were heavy with the fever, the blond hair matted with sweat strayed over her forehead. On the coverlet her hand rested, a flower of fragile wax. She breathed with difficulty, the pinched rose leaf nostrils quivering with each effort.

"He is coming? I am waiting for him. You have promised."

Out of the great bed, from under the silk canopy, the voice seemed to come already from the other world. It was not querulous, it did not even seem to suffer, but with all its weakness it had a strange insistence. Her mother bent over her, taking her hand in both of hers.

"Yes, dearest. He is coming."

The assurance quieted her. A wan smile passed over her face, and her eyes a moment before dull, with the glaze of coming death, brightened. Then, weariness intervening, she closed her eyes and lay very still.

The great room was now heavy with the silence. The white and gold bedstead, with the cupids climbing up its pillars, with its canopy of yellow silk, its general sense of voluptuous lassitude, was an example of the Regency at its best. Conceived under the inspiration of the courtesan, it possesses as a couch of pain for a fragile little child a poignant irony. The mother watching by the bedside felt this. The great spaces of the room, the ceiling by Boucher, the dressing table bright with silver, the colored prints of Fra-

gonard on the walls, all reflected the ironic shafts which were entering her heart. Yet she had brought her daughter into this room because it was her own. She had brought her there because she knew that the child was drifting from her, or rather that for the first time she felt the gulf which had always yawned between them. The doctor had told her that the time grew short, and in terror she realized that her child had never really been her own, that her soul she had never touched, perhaps because she had never tried. In an agony of self-reproach she had vowed that things would change, and from the nursery she had had her brought into this great room, a room which expressed so utterly the spirit of its inhabitant.

Yet now the child seemed even further from her. The huge spaces about her, the hard cruelty of the furniture, the artificial magnificence, swallowed her up. In these surroundings the mother had bloomed a splendid orchid. From the gold and the white and the silver, from the nymphs on the ceiling, from the twilight of the curtained windows she had drawn her richest substance. In this early Eighteenth Century conservatory, her soul and her body had alike blossomed. It was surroundings such as these which had enabled her to become the great artist that she was.

In the high pier glass she suddenly caught her reflection. Her face was drawn and tears had furrowed it, yet it was even then superbly beautiful. She was thirty-four, yet her figure was as of a girl of eighteen. Her voice was only beginning to be at its prime.

In her art and in her life no luxury nor success could be added. She had climbed the ladder and her head was already in the clouds.

The man who was her husband had surrounded her with all this luxury. She was perfectly married. This she knew. Her husband possessed her tastes, her desires, and he possessed the wealth to give them immediate satisfaction. She was not one of those who believed that poverty is the handmaid of art. She had known poverty and she knew that until its pressure had been removed, her soul had been stifled, her spirit cramped and stultified.

And then her husband was all that she desired most in men. He was distinguished in appearance and in manner, he was cultivated in his tastes, an admirable musician, an amateur in the best sense of the term. Moreover, he was tactful, patient, sympathetic. She loved him, she was happy with him. When very rarely she had looked back into her past, to the other man she had married when she was eighteen, the little anaemic, pale-faced, uninspired clerk, it was with a shudder. For eight years she had borne it, struggling towards the light, crushed by poverty, by the care of a daughter and weighed down continually by a man whose spiritual horizon was bounded by the walls of an office in which he never would rise, and the walls of a home into which he brought nothing except a dog-light fidelity to his wife and a complete inability to understand. Yet he had possessed a strange nobility. This she recognized. When the other man had appeared, when her chance for fame had come, he had quietly stepped aside. He had given up to her everything, even their daughter, whom he adored.

Her daughter alone had not understood. She loved her father, and her mother often sadly admitted, resembled him. Yet the luxury of her new surroundings she felt would transform her.

All women turn to softness as the flowers open to the sun. And her new husband had been kindness itself to the little girl. He had showered her with presents, with attentions. Never for an instant had he made her feel that she was anything but his own. Yet the child remained unmoved, even resentful. Before she had often been affectionate with her mother, especially in those interminable evenings when they had finished supper and her father had put on his slippers and taken off his coat, and after reading his paper, had proposed the inevitable game of checkers. Then the little girl would climb up on the sofa beside her mother and putting her arm about her would lay her cheek against hers. The mother remembered these months with a poignant bitterness. They had been so grey and hopeless, and yet now that she thought of them, filled with a tender warmth.

She had always possessed a voice. She used to sing the operatic airs even in those days, her husband was apt to drowse off in the midst of them, and only wake up when for self-defense she would break into "Silver Threads Among the Gold" or "Old Folks at Home." She had wanted to study, but it had been impossible. She sang, however, on Sunday in a church choir, and it was the organist who had taken an interest in her and introduced her to the man who was to create her opportunity. After her marriage she had gone with him to Europe for three years of hard study, four years in the Italian opera houses, and then the Metropolitan.

"He is coming? I am waiting for him. You have promised."

Again the child's voice, from the great recess of the bed. It was thin yet startlingly clear. The mother bent over her again.

"Yes, darling. He is coming. He will be here soon."

"Go and see if he is not at the corner. Go, please."

There was despair in the child's tone,

despair and what was worse to the mother, unbelief. Her daughter's trust—even in that she had failed. As she turned she again caught her image in the pier glass, and a sudder of revulsion swept over her. What right had she to her beauty, her figure, her stately carriage? Behind her reflection was that of the bed. Lost within it was a tiny hump showing under the coverlet. It seemed like nothing, and soon it would disappear forever. And she with her beauty would go on, proclaimed as Tosca, as Leonora, perhaps some day as Isole. And to her daughter her fame meant nothing. She had a dim consciousness that the child hated it, hated her voice, her beauty, hated the great house her genius had won for them both. They had separated her from her father. And now she was lying there, in these alien surroundings, waiting for him and then for death.

"Go, please."

The cruelty of the words was stupendous, yet they must be obeyed. She stepped out into the corridor and down the marble of the curving staircase. At the foot, the dancing faun, a genuine Donatello, seemed to grimace at her from its pedestal, the softness of the Persian rug burned into her feet. A liveried footman stepped forward and threw open for her the great door, curtained with damask over its glass and iron. The footman's face was impassive, yet it too seemed to smile sardonically within. She stepped on to the pavement and gazed towards the avenue. She was bareheaded and she knew she must be attracting attention. But her daughter had commanded and she must obey.

II

How long she stood there she never knew, but it seemed to her an eternity. The cars swept by on the avenue interminably. She wondered who they contained, and whether they brought happiness or unhappiness. Then a bus stopped at the corner of the street and a figure descended, a little man, in a brown faded suit.

Her heart leapt forward, then stopped. He came walking quickly up the street, with that indecisive step she remembered, a step which seemed a symbol of his inner being. She fled up the steps and into the house.

"The gentleman who is coming you will show up to my room."

The footman bowed and she slipped up the staircase and into a side drawing-room. She could not meet him but she must see. The oppressive silence continued for a minute, and then below she heard his hesitating voice. Though he was on a supreme errand, he was awed by his surroundings. She could feel this at once. She had expected it. Yet somehow she felt no contempt for him, only a fear, and, odd to state, a sort of dull hatred. She heard his steps upon the staircase. They passed her. On the threshold of the bedroom she heard them stop; then she knew he had entered.

She waited, tense, quivering, her ears open for the slightest sound. She heard nothing. Why didn't he speak? Why didn't her daughter cry out? Could it be that he was too late? The blood was hammering in her brain, hammering, hammering. The house seemed to be full of echoes, of voices, of spectres. The echoes, the voices, the spectres were everywhere, everywhere, except there where he was and his daughter. She wanted to cry out, to demand that he leave. He had entered like a thief, he was a thief. He was stealing what he had long ago relinquished. She had won all because she had deserved to win it. He was nothing, a dull grey ghost of a man, a thing of despal. Yet he was there and she could not order him to leave. The great house had become of cardboard, and the faun below its only veritable occupant.

And now the echoes became insistent. They were laughing at her, the voices were mocking her, the spectres gibbering. All that she won and had had become nothing. The very walls were rocking. Nothing was stable except that room, and that was like a

mansion of the ages, of granite, rearing its power amid a phantasmagoria of ironic laughter. And the silence of that room, its immutable insistence was terrifying. And she stole out into the corridor towards it, as to the only haven of reality left to her in the caty-clism.

She did not enter, though she tried to. The door was open but it was barred to her by an invisible power. From the storm about her and behind her she seemed to look into an abode of perfect peace. He was seated at the bedside, his daughter's hand in his. She had turned and was gazing up into his face; neither spoke, but between them there was a sense of utter understanding. Her wan features were gathered into a smile, a smile that never wavered. And her smile had entered into him. She saw him as she never before had seen him, this petty clerk, so far beneath her, transfigured by his daughter's love. The room seemed so small now, no space in it for anything except that sense of complete union, of the entrance of one soul into another.

And then she began to think; or rather thoughts drove themselves into her brain like arrows from the bow of some preternatural archer. Each arrow was barbed and each barb was poisoned. The house was a great tomb she had built for her daughter. As a tomb alone was her daughter happy in it, for gazing in at the white, smiling, upturned face, she realized that her daughter was happy in it at last.

Now she knew the true significance of its marmorean halls. Her husband had intended it as a palace of his love, but always she had felt something creeping from its foundations, something inexplicably cold. And now the cold had mounted, had become

all enveloping. The walls were pregnant with it. It was more terrible in that it was not sensuous but absorbing, almost pontifical. It was a cold which would shut her forever from eternity, for she knew that only in her child was eternity possible. Her husband, her friends, her art were powerless to aid her. She had had a daughter, yet her womb was barren. The child's body was escaping her, the child's soul was eternal—but eternal not with her. She would rush in, demand the rights of motherhood, tear the child's hand from the strange man who was sitting there. She tried to pass the door, but her feet would not obey, the cold had frozen them to the threshold of the tomb!

The child was still smiling, yet she felt suddenly that something was different. The father was smiling too, but his smile now possessed a radiance which at first she did not understand. She saw him rise, release the hand, saw it fall gently on the coverlet. He bent over his daughter and kissed her gently on the brow, then as if supremely confident, he turned. With a gigantic effort she moved her feet from the doorway and stood aside. He walked towards her, no longer with a hesitating step, but firm, unwavering. He did not glance towards her. She knew that he did not see her, and as he passed her she knew that it was his daughter who was smiling from his eyes. He passed down the stairway, and she knew that with him passed his daughter. She passed out with him and out of her life forever. Then for the first time she rushed into the room and threw herself on her knees by the bedside. From the face of the dead child the smile had vanished. Far below her sounded the clang of the great door.



THREE MORE DRAMATIC REVERIES

By John McClure

I

PETRARCA

HER face flickers between my eyes and the parchment—her face that has hounded me over the world. There is no use. I cannot study. I shall go to Avignon at once. From there to Pisa. From there to Rome. I must go travelling again—God! and quickly. I am glad she is dead. Her face has hounded me over the world. . . .

Life is hard. It has well-nigh killed me. I am a sad man. I have travelled from end to end of the world, from city to city, from court to court. I can find rest nowhere. I drowned myself in books as lesser men in wine. I learned Latin and Greek. But I could find no rest. Her face has hounded me over the world. I am glad she is dead. . . .

Life is hard. . . . And I have been fortunate. I am a great poet. Fifteen years ago they crowned me at Rome before a multitude, crowned me with a blare of trumpets—"Petrarca, Poet!" I am a household word. Princes scrape to me. Even so. "Petrarca, Poet!" Yet still I go travelling over the world, from city to city, from court to court, hot of a fever and find no rest. How pale a guerdon this fame is! "Petrarca, Poet!" Her face has hounded me over the world. Her voice as she crooned to her children five hundred miles away has smothered the blare of trumpets. . . .

The women of France are beautiful, and the women of Italy. They are very kind. But always from five hundred miles away her cold face floats

between my lips and theirs. Always, making me sad.

I have suffered. I am glad she is dead. In the white nights of winter I was near mad with thinking of her—for thirty years. I heard him turn in his sleep at her side—yea, five hundred miles away. I was near mad with thinking of it. I am glad she is dead. . . .

It was a sin to love her. I have prayed God every day. But I could not help it. And she cared nothing for me, nothing. It was nothing to her that I wrote the most wonderful songs in the world for her sake. It was nothing to her that I was crowned poet at Rome, for her sake. It was nothing to her. She did not love me. Life is hard. . . .

II

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

I AM worth five thousand pound and my health is fair. I have nothing to complain of. I have been very successful. (I am worth five thousand pound. . . .)

It was hard work did it, and good investments. I was not born with a mouth full of shillings. It was hard work. When I went to London five and twenty years ago, who would have dreamed? . . . Not I, certainly. It was very discouraging. And it had not been for the old mare at home and that deer-case I should ha' no doubt come back and turned green-grocer. . . . But that was out of the question. They would have had the law o' me. . . .

Kit Marlowe saved me. It was he taught me all that I know, Kit Marlowe. He was greater than I. . . . But so damned unruly—so *damned* un-

ruly. Women and wine—women and wine—they ruin them all. . . . 'Twas pity he died. I owed him money. . . .

I made more from "Hamlet" than from anything else, but the "Moor" paid well. I have nothing to complain of.

There was a woman I should like to have had, but that is neither here nor there. I shall not grieve about that.

This is the quietest town in England, and I am worth five thousand pound, and people here do not sneer at me now for deer-stealing and most think I did well in deserting my wife.

I have nothing to complain of.

And tonight I shall drink red wine and sing songs with Ben Jonson and John Ford until daylight, so help me God!

III

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

THEY poke fun at me. The simple souls call me stupid. The stupid souls call me simple. Because I am absent-minded, thinking of other things. It is true I am forgetful sometimes and I was no scholar, never, and I cannot keep money. But I see nothing simple in that. And I was a ne'er-do-well in my youth; most men have been so. But there is nothing simple in that. I wish I was still a ne'er-do-well, singing and playing a flute. The tallest fellows that ever I met sang songs in ale-houses and the kindest folk in the world sleep under bridges and beg bread. . . .

They call me simple. I have written profound essays. I have discussed polite learning like a professor. My

poems are faultless. I can write plays—good plays. Yet they call me simple. I shall go down in history as "Poor Noll." There shall be a tale told for two hundred years of an Irishman was born an idiot and wrote books by accident. They will always say I was simple. . . .

But it is because I am absent-minded, and out of place here. I feel I am still only a ne'er-do-well walking in crimson breeches and eating at gentlemen's tables. I am out of place here. No one ever called me simple when I was singing songs in ale-houses or playing upon a flute. I was better than they all. . . . The fops go every evening to Vauxhall to hear the concerts. And I go, too, in my velvet breeches, and hear them singing "Tweet-tweet! Tweet-tweet!"—I like better an old song and ten bully boys and a barrel and the strumming of rude guitars. . . .

I cannot keep money. I am over my ears in debt. I am unlucky at cards. They borrow of me. I cannot keep it. . . .

"Poor Noll!" I am as ugly as mud. And simple. But that is all very well. I have had a great day in the world. I have lived more than they all. . . . I have never married a wife, and I am damned glad. . . .

Often I sit in my chair and dream—when I am not writing a book—and long for the old days when I was only a bad penny and happy as a king, the old days of my youth when I was good-fellow-well-met in ale-houses, and sang songs, and was frequently drunk, and wandered the highroads of the world playing upon a flute.



GIVE a man enough rope and he will hang himself. A woman will knit socks or something.

ENCHANTERS OF MEN*

I

A Queen of Hearts

By Thornton Hall

"WHILE she loved," wrote Marmontel, "no one loved more tenderly, more passionately, or more faithfully. What a pity that so seductive a character should be so fickle!"

And Marmontel was only one of a legion of lovers who found Mademoiselle Clairon's loyalty as evanescent as her ardour was tender and passionate.

Never was woman better dowered for the conquest of man than this beautiful daughter of France. Love was as necessary to her as the air she breathed. "It is," she herself confessed, "a necessity of my nature; and I have satisfied that necessity, but not in a fashion for which I have any need to blush. My talents and my amiability caused so many men to throw themselves at my feet that it was impossible for a heart so susceptible as mine to be proof against the most seductive of passions and immune to the charm of love."

Three ambitions, indeed, apart from love, dominated her life—to succeed in her art, to live in luxury and splendor, and to enjoy every moment; and to their realization she devoted all her energy, her gifts and her charms. Without education, she made herself a society queen; without any remarkable histrionic ability, she was hailed as the supreme tragic actress of her day; and without heart, she enchained a legion of lovers, discarding each in turn when he could no longer satisfy her capricious fancy or minister to her advancement. She revelled in their homage, and in the luxury with which

it surrounded her; she permitted them to feed her vanity and extravagance; and considered them sufficiently rewarded by her smiles and her favour.

Thus she dallied with love and drained every cup of pleasure that was presented to her lips, from the days of her girlhood to the eighties, when, "old, wrinkled and shrivelled up," as she herself confesses, she still had the magic to catch and to keep within her toils one of the handsomest men in France, an Ambassador young enough to be her son.

Few women who have dazzled the world have had a cradling so obscure as Hippolyte Clairon who, as she tells us in her "Memoires," "was born in the unhappy class which the laws of public opinion used formerly to treat as having no civic existence." Her father was a sergeant in the garrison town of Condé; her mother was a poverty-stricken seamstress who wore no wedding-ring; and the child's destiny seemed to be to earn a precarious living by her needle—hemming sheets, underlinen for officers' wives. He would indeed have been a wonderful prophet who could have foreseen that one day this child of the slums would be the most envied woman in all France, with a court of coronetted lovers; and that for nearly a score of years she would be a virtual queen.

II

As a child of twelve Hippolyte gave no promise whatever of beauty or fame. She is described as an unat-

*EDITOR'S NOTE:—This is the first of a series of articles by Mr. Thornton Hall, author of "Love Intrigues of Royal Courts," etc., etc. The second, "A Delilah of the French Stage," will appear in the next number of THE SMART SET.

tractive girl, incorrigibly lazy, and so difficult to control that, as a punishment, her mother, who had migrated to Paris, used to lock her up almost daily in an empty room,—little dreaming, we may be sure, what the punishment would lead to.

The place of durance overlooked a room in a house opposite, in which M^{lle} Dangeville, of the *Comédie Française*, took her dancing lessons; and the child, fascinated by the graceful movements of the danseuse, soon began to beguile her hours of imprisonment by imitating them, until in suppleness and grace she almost rivalled the young lady over the way.

When at last she persuaded a friend to treat her to a visit to the theater, there opened for the seamstress's daughter a new wonder-world, the first glimpse of which fired her ambition to enter it. Her little head was from that day full of the theater; it filled her thoughts by day and her dreams by night; she was never happy except when dancing, singing or playing mimic parts; and her happiness was complete when her mother was at last induced to invite a real actor to hear her declaim and to see her dance.

So surprised and delighted was the actor by the child's promise that he himself undertook her training; and within two years she was "transported to the seventh heaven," when she secured an engagement at Rouen, as actress, singer and ballet-dancer, at a salary of one hundred pistoles a year; and her mother was able to exchange her needlework for employment in the box-office.

Then followed a few years of blissfully happy, rambling life, the young actress winning laurels at Caen and Ghent, Lille, Le Havre, and a score of other French towns, captivating all hearts by her beauty, her grace and her witcheries, and by her coquetries driving to distraction the retinue of young gallants who followed in her wake. So embarrassing, in fact, was the admiration Hippolyte excited thus early that her mother, in alarm, insisted on pro-

viding her with a husband as protector, selecting for this purpose a provincial comedian, old enough to be her father.

"My mother's orders," she tells us, "and her violence—for she went so far as to point a pistol at my head to enforce my consent—convinced me that I really needed a protector who, without needing to set the law in motion, would be able to keep those in check about me and defend me."

But, convinced as she was of her mother's prudence, Hippolyte, who had a still stronger will of her own, point-blank refused to wear a wedding-ring, although she consented to accept the comedian as her fiancé. She was determined at any cost to keep her freedom; and what use she made of it, in spite of her "protector," the chronicles of the time make very clear.

She simply could not keep her legion of admirers away from her feet; and, indeed, she seemed to have little wish to do so. But, while making them minister to her vanity and her love of luxury, she kept her heart and her reputation equally untouched. Within a few weeks, indeed, of her mother's dramatic ultimatum we find her dividing her smiles among a trio of gallants, the Comte de Berghice, Major Desplans and the Chevalier de By, three of the most accomplished gallants in France.

Conquest of man seems to have come easily to the untutored child of the Condé slums, now grown to lovely young womanhood; and gifted, as even her rivals admitted, with a rare power to charm. The fame of her beauty, her gifts and her graces had already traveled through France; and she had but to pick and choose among the high-placed lovers who vied with each other for her favour. When she was at Ghent the third Duke of Marlborough made a pilgrimage there to lay his heart and fortune at her feet, only to find his offer flatly rejected. Mademoiselle told him frankly that she "hated Englishmen"; and his ducal rank had no lure for a woman who was being wooed by princes. Even the offer of a princely coronet failed to attract this most auto-

cratic of women, whose boast it was to the last day of her life that she had turned her back on scores of titles.

The list of her lovers is eloquent of her power to charm men of all classes; for it includes a reigning sovereign, two princes, two ducs and five marquises,—to say nothing of comtes and barons, who rub shoulders with actors, lawyers and wealthy merchants. But, although she coquetted with one and all, and exploited them to feed her vanity and extravagance, she contrived to keep both hand and heart in safe custody.

"To please me," she says, "men have had to be virtuous as well as amiable. Over and over again I have had the opportunity of becoming a great lady, lawfully wedded. For fifteen years I resisted the prayers and entreaties of a most fascinating Comte, who is very dear to me, in order that I might not deviate from the path of duty to my art and myself."

But while dallying with love, Hippolyte's heart was ever in her acting. She was determined to be a great actress; and with such powerful friends behind her, it is small wonder that before long she received a command from the King to sing in the Opera in his capital; or that the Comédie Française was compelled to open its jealously-guarded doors to her, in spite of the protests of its lady members who feared the rivalry of a woman so beautiful and popular. Thus it was that the provincial actress took Paris by storm in such parts as Phédre, Ariadne, Zenobia and Électre, throwing even M^{lle} Dumesnil, until then the supreme queen of tragedy, into the shade. Thus one triumph succeeded another, each impersonation more brilliant than its predecessors, until she had established herself the unrivalled queen of the Paris stage.

III

Not content with being a great actress M^{lle} Clairon aspired to be a queen of society; and in this ambition, too, Fortune smiled on her. Ladies of

the highest rank sought her out and made much of her. She was received with open arms in the most exclusive salons, even at the Royal Court itself; and her cup of success was full to the brim.

Meanwhile, though she was now able to supply herself with every reasonable luxury, she seems to have shewn no scruple in accepting all the tributes her lovers cared to offer. Indeed she exacted them as part of the homage due to her.

The Marquis de Ximenes, for example, wooed her in vain, until he sent her, as *gage d'amour*, a Périgord pie, in which the six truffles had been replaced by as many rouleaux, of fifty Louis each. Then only she began to smile on the lover, who had learned the way to her affections; and her smiles became radiant when he sold one of his estates for the pleasure of pouring the proceeds into her lap.

M. de Cindré gave Mademoiselle "two thousand livres, of which she stood in pressing need," and further persuaded her to accept a sumptuously furnished country house, which she condescended to make her occasional home, until one day Monsieur was inconsiderate enough to pay her a surprise visit, when he discovered a rival playing the rôle of host. The Prince de Monaco, another of her legion of lovers, who was less lavish than Mademoiselle had hoped, heard from her pretty lips that a "strange gentleman" had been good enough to send her "chocolate and champagne and a service of porcelain encrusted with gold."

"Send them back at once," exclaimed the Prince, stung to jealousy.

"Certainly, if you wish it," Mademoiselle sweetly answered, knowing full well that she had already sold them, and that the money was safe in her purse.

It is thus abundantly clear that Mademoiselle's favours were not always as disinterested as she would like the world to believe. It is equally certain that she changed her lovers as lightly as she changed her gowns—the

more readily when they ceased to be of use to her.

Nor was she content with thus exploiting the lovers with long purses. It is said that "one nobleman, after a few weeks of her society, left her without a coat on his back"; and that the comedian Grandval's infatuation reduced him to such straits that he was only saved from starvation by the charity of his fellow actors. And yet, such was the spell she cast over her victims that not one of them was ever heard to utter a word of reproach against her; while Grandval died in utter destitution, whispering her name with his last breath.

And her vanity on the stage was no less than her heartlessness—for such it was—in love. To her fellow artistes, indeed, she was insufferable. "Her bearing towards the greatest of them was always that of Omnipotence towards blackbeetles." She lost no opportunity of insulting them.

On one occasion when they ventured to suggest that she neglected her duties, she retorted insolently,

"It is true that I play but seldom; but a single one of my performances suffices to earn your living for a month."

And this arrogant attitude she exhibited to the world at large—to the public who applauded her, to the dramatic authors who ministered to her fame and vanity; and even to royalty. There was thus small regret when at last she announced her intention to retire from the stage into private life—where no doubt she would find pleasure and profit more agreeably combined.

IV

THOUGH her stage queendom was thus ended, she still had ample compensation in love. Shaking the dust of Paris off her feet, she made her home for a time in St. Petersburg, where she renewed her old intimacy with the Comte de Valbelle, a man handsome as he was rich, and seven years her junior. Through all her bewildering changes

of lovers the Comte had remained constant to her for fifteen years, and asked nothing better than to make her his wife.

Once, indeed, his ambition seemed on the point of being realised; but at the last moment, for some unexplained reason, she changed her mind. And when her extravagance had almost ruined him she took the opportunity of parting from him forever. Under the pretext that she had heard of his coquetting with pretty girls in his park, she wrote him a mock-pathetic letter of farewell. After saying that she freely forgave him for all the grief he had caused her, and begging him to cherish her memory, she concluded,

"My tears prevent me from reading what I have written. Farewell, Valbelle!"

But, although she thus parted from the too volatile Comte, he died a bachelor for her sake, placing her statue by Houdon in the garden of his chateau; and, when he died, leaving her an annuity of four thousand francs.

Although Mademoiselle Clairon was now approaching middle age, she seems to have lost little either of her power to charm or of her success in love. Of one of her favourites of this time, a handsome young student at the school of dramatic art which she had opened, whose head she had turned with her witcheries, M. de Goncourt tells us—"His age was only sixteen. He was as pretty a boy as could be; she had christened him *L'Amour*; and he was never called by any other name. But *L'Amour* took it into his head to seek lessons other than dramatic from a professor other than M^{lle} Clairon; and she, it is said, in a fit of jealousy, turned *L'Amour* out of her house."

Within a few days, however, she had transferred her fickle affection to Larive, another of her pupils, to whom for years she played alternately the parts of lover and mother—now writing him letters of wise counsel, advising him on dress, deportment and conduct; now lavishing on him the ardour of a love-sick girl.

When he wrote to tell her what a certain great lady was saying of their relations, she answered,

"As I have not the honour of being acquainted with the Princess of Stadenberg, and as my attachment, innocent though it is, like all my attachments, may set tongues wagging; and as a grisette like myself is always a nobody in a great lady's eyes, I am not surprised to hear that people expect to see me make myself ridiculous."

She was even, strange as it may seem, generous enough to give him sound advice in his love-affairs with her rival.

Thus she writes to him,

"Love is a natural sentiment, specially natural to a man of your age, and I am not surprised . . . so you must get married if you want to; but as love is a transitory thing, I hope you will make sure about the lady's fortune."

And when she finds that Larive is on the point of following her advice, she gives him her benediction thus:—

"Farewell! may you be happy! Your happiness shall be my consolation; and my distress shall be my lesson in the instability of human life and fortune."

Thus she was destined to look helplessly on while Larive, probably the only man she had ever really loved, led the daughter of the Director of the Brussels Theater to the altar.

"For a time," she confesses, "I was heartbroken. But I was never one to waste life in vain regrets; and before long I proved that, even at fifty, life and love could be very sweet."

V

THOUGH now middle-aged Mademoiselle was still beautiful and had lost little of her power to charm. Once more turning her back on Paris, we soon find her taking a new lease of life and love at the Anspach Court as friend of the Margrave, whom she seems to have had no difficulty in catching in the toils of her charms, although he was at least a dozen years her junior. Here, indeed, was a dramatic change. The middle-aged actress, daughter of

the Condé slums, who had wasted her sweetness on the unknown comedian, Larive, was, by a marvellous turn of Fortune's wheel, raised to an uncrowned queendom, with a Margrave as her devoted friend and protector.

No wonder she was well pleased with herself when she could write to Larive, who still remained her friend, in such a strain as this:

"My affection and my vanity could not fail to be satisfied with the homage lavished on me. My house is always full of people; the greatest ladies in the land do me the honour of coming to supper with me. You cannot imagine what a figure I cut in this country. It is like a dream. Sometimes I am tempted to believe that I am really a great personage; but you, my dear boy, know my heart too well to fear that my head will be turned."

Then, by way of postscript, she adds:

"I have five footmen, a valet and a butler."

Of her royal lover she speaks in terms of enthusiasm. He is the "best and most charming man" she has ever known; his "frankness and noble simplicity" are a constant amazement to her. Such was his respect for her abilities that he practically allowed her to hold the reins of government, taking her advice in all things in preference to that of his Ministers.

Thus for seventeen years Mademoiselle held her proud place as left-hand Margravine of Anspach, queening it over the ladies of her lover's court and taking the reins of government from his feeble hands—and all the time taking credit to herself for her benevolence! The Margravine, a colourless lady in delicate health, was powerless against such an autocratic rival in her husband's affection, and submitted almost without a protest to being supplanted. Indeed, she frankly admired the woman who had such power to rule him.

"What power you have over him! It is marvellous!" she once exclaimed in admiration when Mademoiselle

Clairon revealed the secret of her ascendancy to her.

She owed it, she explained, to the fact that "she was well informed, and entered into his serious interests;" and she urged the Margravine to follow her example.

It is possible that the seamstress's daughter might have died an uncrowned queen, had not Lady Craven, with her beauty and her seductions, arrived at Anspach and challenged her supremacy. It was an unequal duel; for M^{lle} Clairon was nearly thirty years older than her lovely and scheming rival; and it was not long before she realized that her sun was fast setting. In her anger, she wrote a scathing letter to the Margrave, upbraiding him for his "passion for a woman whom, unfortunately, you do not know;" for his want of respect for his own age and dignity.

"Just heaven!" she wrote, "are you the man whom I have held up as the model of virtue? I see that I can advance no further claims, and that our bonds are to be dissolved forever."

Then, with a final touch of well-simulated dignity,

"I pity and pardon you; and I wish you the same portion of happiness and glory as I experience of grief and regret."

VI

MADemoiselle CLAIRON was nearing her seventieth birthday when she thus bade farewell to her glory and made her sad way back to Paris, then in the throes of the Revolution. Even to her ever-buoyant spirit it must have seemed that life was now ended; but Fortune still had a parting smile left for her in her old age. It was during the dark days of the Terror that she first met and enslaved the last of her lovers—Baron de Stael-Holstein, a man young enough to be her son (he was, in fact, twenty-six years her junior), the handsome Ambassador to the Court of Sweden.

M^{lle} Clairon was now infirm as well

as old, and lonely as well as infirm. She was, moreover, reduced almost to poverty. In a letter she wrote to Henri Meister, she pictures herself pathetically as "without friends, without relatives, without occupation."

"And yet," she adds, "my heart is only between twenty-five and thirty."

What had the gay and gallant young diplomatist of forty-three seen to attract him in the shrivelled old woman of sixty-nine! She herself frankly marvels at the fact.

"Standing as I do on the verge of the grave," she wrote to him, "I can do nothing for your happiness and your comfort. On the contrary I make inroads on your fortune; my infirmities add to your troubles; and I shall soon distress you by my death. I can do nothing for you; you are doing everything for me."

Indeed, had she been in the prime of her youth and beauty, the Baron could not have done more to prove his devotion. He installed her in a comfortable house which he bought for her; made her an allowance of 5,000 francs a year, and spent at least ten times as much more on her.

"From the verge of the grave," she writes to him, "you have brought me back to the sweet and innocent illusions of the springtime of my life. To you I shall owe the happiness of having someone to love until the hour of my last sigh."

His kindness and affection, indeed, had dissipated the clouds of age and infirmity and loneliness, and revived the sunshine of the vanished years. And she loved him probably more truly and deeply than she had ever loved before. When his duties took him away from her side she once wrote: "If only I could have kissed him once! I am very old; and, alas! who knows whether I shall ever see him again? You know that my only reason for writing to him is that I may be able to love him a little longer."

Thus a few more happy years passed for M^{lle} Clairon until, towards 1801,

the Baron fell on evil days. He lost his Embassy, his creditors became clamorous, and he could no longer minister to her needs. She was thus compelled to close her house, dismiss her servants, and find a last refuge under the humble roof of her adopted daughter, Mme. de Rianderie. Here, in pov-

erty and loneliness, forgotten by the world in which she had for so long played such a brilliant part, her life ebbed slowly out until, one January day in 1803, a month after she had seen her eightieth birthday, she passed painlessly away to where "beyond these voices" there is peace.



AN AGREEABLE SURPRISE

By Anderson Clark

MY wife ordered me to bring up the baby and carriage she had left on the stoop below. When I got down, I found the carriage easily enough, but the baby had evidently disappeared. It was an agreeable surprise. Carrying a baby carriage up four flights is easier when the baby is not in it.



SEA-PIECE

By Babette Deutsch

DUNES overthrown by the wind lie prone to the twilight;
Held in the foam darkened hollows and softly moving
Over the pallid sea-marge in slow resurgence
Whispers the ocean.

Threads of foam in the fine sands lingering faintly
Sink as we watch. The touch of the air is colder.
Swift the oncoming clouds. Your lips upon my lips
Salt with the sea-wind.



NO man has ever been really surprised who never went to sleep in a full bath-tub—and turned over on his face.



DON'T mistake curiosity for popularity. Most any person could draw a crowd to watch him commit suicide.



WHEN in doubt—keep quiet until you find out how much she knows.

THE RETURN

By Marie McGuire

WHEN a woman returns to the maternal roof—after having left it in marriage—whether it is as a widow, a divorcee, or under any circumstances whatsoever, in her heart there is a tragedy that only those who have lived through the experience know anything at all about.

I returned in May.

The scent of moss-roses brings the scene before me like magic. They nodded to me mournfully, as, stripped of illusions about everything in all the world, broken in body and soul and mind and spirit, I dragged myself up the familiar walk. On the porch of the old homestead my father was waiting,

the stamp of seventy years on his wonderful face, the lines deep and the figure gaunt with the added burden of my unhappiness.

I tried to avoid his eyes. He placed both arms around me and said quietly, "Look at me."

What terrors can the hereafter hold for me after I looked into his eyes and read that he trusted me?

"You are as welcome as the day you were born!" he said—and I had to turn away or die!

When I got inside, mother gave me hell for not holding out for more alimony.



RUE

By Harold Crawford Stearns

I NEVER see the dark
Edging up the street
But I think of nights,
Long, long ago,
When we fashioned dreams,
Dainty ones and sweet,
Out of those things
Only lovers know.

I never hear the wind
Singing day to sleep
But I think how you,
Long ago in Spring,
Fled with all our dreams—
As if that could keep
Them and me and you
From remembering!

THE REUNION

By Mifflin Crane

HE was born in that city and returned to it at last, because he was at ease nowhere else. The sentimental shrinking that had kept him in alien towns so long weighed very little with him now; eleven years had blunted its effect. It no longer mattered that his former wife was still there, and the boy. It was preposterous to suppose that he would meet her, unwillingly find her face among so many thousand others, and at last he felt hardened to that chance, if it should happen.

And their boy—he had not seen the boy since they parted. His last memory was of a very small baby, incapable of speech, crawling along on the floor like a clumsy four-legged animal, howling through the long night, smiling like a seraph at odd moments. That would not suffice to delineate the child now, who must be entering the years of his adolescence. Doubtless he could not recognize his boy.

So he came back and took rooms in an old street that he had known well years before. He scorned the newer part of the city where miles of houses had appeared like sudden fungi, distressingly characterless, each one pushed out in front into a small porch, the roof supported by several wooden columns with remote Ionic volutes, above which a tin bay-window projected like the pop-eye of a monster. His street was the lingering thoroughfare of an older and more gracious time. The houses were built up straight out of an extremely red brick that on bright days seemed freshly cleaned and scoured. Under each window was a ledge of old eroded marble, the front

steps were marble and worn into concave hollows.

One of his rooms faced on the street and directly in front of his windows he had a view of a small store that did business with the neighborhood school children in cheap candy and small toys. Sometimes he sat here and watched the boys and girls go in and out, experiencing at the evidence of their blitheness, a vague, half-defined melancholy. They sometimes reminded him of his boy; he thought of his wife, but he did not expect to see either of them. He had no idea where they lived, and moreover, she was married again.

One day he discovered an agreeable rathskeller a few blocks from his rooms and he made use of this retreat every day. He usually visited it for an hour or two in the afternoon and again for a similar period in the evening. He came to know many of the faces there; some of them, like his, were always present at certain hours. He became a member of a group that occupied one of the long tables in the under-cellar. They talked endlessly, drank beer out of tall steins with a pewter lid you could snap down with a sharp report, laughed a good deal, joked with the waiter. He considered himself fortunate to have discovered this place.

In the evening and sometimes in the afternoon, the crowd played "Darts," using a large dart-board hung up on the wall. It was a game he had never found common in any city but this one; there he had known it since his earliest days; to play again was to revive old memories. He developed an extraordinary proficiency in throwing the darts

and frequently could put two or three of them, in a single throw, in the yellow circle that figured as sixty on the score. Only one other man, an ex-cavalry officer named Perry—but more popularly called the "Commodore"—was in any way his match; between these a fervid rivalry flourished. They were forever playing an endless championship match for honors that passed, with the fickleness of a coquette, from one to the other.

One day, rather late in the afternoon, returning from a game in which he had agreeably defeated the Commodore, he turned into his street and immediately noticed a boy staring into the window of the little store opposite his apartment. He happened to approach on the same side of the street, and the boy's profile was delineated sharply in a ray of red sunlight.

At once he was stirred by a profound conviction of knowing this youngster and then, as by reaction, that seemed impossible. Nevertheless his pace slowed, and he stared at the illuminated profile as if it were an arresting phenomenon. Then, suddenly, in a thrilling comprehension, he understood: the boy was his!

The truth of his recognition was manifest, for the features of his former wife were reproduced startlingly in the face of the intent boy. Yet despite his assurance he was aware of a strangely contradictory doubt: for a moment the encounter was incredible. Now he stopped walking and stood on the street watching his son, who never turned his head. The sight of this face stirred his mind with the overtones of old memories; glimpses of days he never thought about flickered in his recollections like half revealed pictures. The boy was still staring into the window. He walked slowly toward him, and stood close to him.

"What interests you so much?" he asked.

The youngster turned, looked at him a moment, and then gave a quick, generous smile.

"They're foreign stamps," he said.

"I'm just beginning to collect them myself. There's a lot in this window I'd like to have."

Somehow he had expected a different voice—his own voice? or his wife's? The boy's was a fresh soprano without special characterization and in a way that relieved him and made him more at ease. He followed the gaze of his son and looked in at the window. There were several cheap collections of stamps on display.

"You save stamps? How many have you?"

"Oh, not many! I've just begun. They cost a lot of money!"

"Do you live near here?"

"Not far. On Delancy Street. I pass on my way from school. I never knew this store kept stamps before."

He watched the boy's face, listened to his clear voice, looked into his eager eyes.

"I used to save postage stamps myself," he said slowly. "—years ago. I still have some. Would you like to look at mine?"

"I'd like to, all right!"

"You see that house over there? I live right upstairs."

"Can we go over and look at your stamps now?"

"Not now. I haven't time to let you look at them now. Would you like to see them tomorrow?"

"Yes, tomorrow if I can then."

"You may come tomorrow, after school. Stop at that house and I'll leave word that you are to be shown right up. I'll have the stamps ready for you to see."

He said good-by to the boy and crossed the street. He went up to his room and sat down near one of the windows. Looking out he saw that his son had gone and the street for the moment was empty.

II

THE encounter no longer seemed strange, but simply natural. It was not peculiar that a father should talk to his own child, or meet him in the same

city. But he wondered for a moment why he had invited the boy to his rooms. He was conscious of no sudden affection, but what he found was a stirring of reminiscences that moved him uncertainly, indefinitely, like an obscure poem, like the patter of rain on the windows, like a walk through the silent streets, late at night. He was not certain that his sensations were pleasant, but nevertheless, he desired them.

Presently he thought of his wife, or, acquiring a momentary mental precision, the woman that had been his wife. She was married again and it was false to couple her name with a possessive. He recalled the sudden catastrophe of their parting, her inflexible anger, his own regret. The incident that had divided them was now remote and bore no adequate proportion to the looming fact of their separation; his trifling lapse was insignificant in the diminished perspective of so many years; he accepted his condition as something of the fates, unexplained.

The next morning he consulted the telephone book, found a dealer in stamps and coins, and visited him. He bought a cheap collection of foreign stamps, a thousand or more, and took them back to his rooms. They were mounted on separate sheets, according to nationalities; he spread them all out on a table and let them stand for the coming of his boy. Early in the afternoon he went out and when he returned his son was seated in the hall downstairs, waiting for him.

The boy greeted him shyly and followed in silence behind his heels as he led the way upstairs. He opened the door of his sitting room and let his visitor go in first.

"I've just put the stamps there on the table," he said. "Have you got as many as that?"

There was a whistled exclamation.

"I should say not! Didn't it take you a long time to save all those?"

"Not so long. I don't collect them any more. I'm going to give you some of these."

The boy was bending over the table,

holding the sheets in his hands.

"British Colonies!" he exclaimed. "I haven't many from British Colonies, except some from Canada. Here's a Shirmoor, three *pies*, unused! I like unused stamps, don't you?"

The father smiled.

"Yes, I like them that way. They look cleaner, don't they? You can have that stamp."

The boy was incredulous.

"Yes, I mean you can have it; tear it off. I'll give you others. I don't collect them nowadays."

He began to ask the child about himself, his school, his activities, his expectations, his home, his mother.

"What about your father?" he asked.

"My father's a travelling man. Sometimes we don't see him for a month or two. That's a long time, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's a long time."

He questioned no longer, and the boy examined the sheets of stamps in silence. The father stood near him, looking at the young intent face that flushed an enthusiasm to these meaningless little squares of paper like a poet to dreams. He studied the features of his son, but the boy gave him very little thought as an individual; he was largely a stirrer of recollections. Still it shocked him a little to discover that the youngster believed a stepfather his own. The other man flared up in his thoughts a moment as a curious, incalculable outsider—and then faded out again like a dying flame.

Reluctantly at last the boy took his leave, but he gladly promised to come back again. He did this with promptness—in two days. In such a way they began their intimacy. His son accepted it as a phenomenon, with unquestioning assurance; the father with some wonder, as a man little used to children, who finds them curious and even a trifle fabulous. He finally ascribed his interest to a natural paternal instinct, but truthfully his willingness to entertain the youngster had a different inspiration.

In looking at his son's face, the line of his cheek, the pout of his lips, the

curve of his chin, or in seeing some eager gesture of his small hands, there were luminous seconds of remembrance, moments when the mother was expressed through her son, and instances of past event returned to his mind with the sudden virility of new experiences; in a degree the years were renewed, he lived again.

He now called his son Eugene and liked to say the full name without a diminutive. He bought him little presents, he gradually gave him, sheet by sheet, the stamps he had purchased, and he secured more in order that there might be always an attraction in his rooms. He seldom found time to visit his rathskeller, and the Commodore's claims to mastery seemed a trivial, a childish matter.

III

ONE afternoon, waiting for Eugene to stop in after school, his landlady knocked on his door and told him that a woman was waiting to see him in the parlor below. Surprised, he left his room and went downstairs. The flight of stairs terminated in a very narrow hall, almost opposite the parlor door. A pair of heavy brown curtains, brocaded after an ineffectual pattern, concealed the room from one in the hallway. He parted these curtains and went in. A woman was seated near the window. As she heard his footsteps she turned and stood up. The light was at her back, her face was in shadow, it was a moment or more before he recognized her. Then his eyes grew wider and he tightened his fingers together: it was his wife.

She spoke to him first.

"I knew it was you!" she said. "I guessed it!"

He found himself giving explanations, irrationally, out of place. There was not a formal word of greeting between them.

"Don't think that I hunted around and lured him here," he said. "I discovered him just by accident. I've only been back a few months. It was just by accident, too, that I took rooms in

this neighborhood. I had no idea you lived anywhere near. It wasn't until I saw Eugene. . . . Confound it, haven't I a right to see my own son? You don't think I tried to kidnap him, do you?"

"I was certain it was you," she went on. "I asked him where he was spending all his time. I made him describe you. I came to find out. . . ."

They were both standing. He was not far within the door, his body poised forward in an attitude of surprise and expostulation. She was still close to the window; one of her hands touched the chair-back; the afternoon sunlight reddened her fustic hair and outlined the edges of her cheeks in fire; a purple shadow like a gauze veil misted her other features.

He became aware of their curious beginning; it was no beginning.

"Then you'll talk to me," he said. "We'd better sit down."

She accepted his suggestion and slowly seated herself. He crossed the room and took the chair at the other window. Now her face was half turned to the light and he could see her plainly.

She had changed, of course. She hadn't the delicacy of feature he remembered. Her chin was rounder, her lips less transparently red, her eyes not so suddenly azure. Nevertheless, she had kept lovely and an old pleasure in looking at her was returned to him.

The sunlight hair was unchanged, xanthine, radiant; it captured lights as formerly and held them as glints, like spirits. And he remembered her voice—it was the same voice now—clear with a certain thinness, not colored with many overtones, a slender stream of white sound, like a flute blown in a very open space. He sat silently appraising her, and she returned his glances, looking back at him.

"Louise, you can't blame me," he said finally, "for making friends with him?"

"No, that wouldn't be reasonable. But I wanted to make sure."

"That it was I? What you going to do now?"

"I don't know. . . ."

"I mean, are you going to tell Eugene that he can't see me? How would you explain that?"

"It could be managed. . . . Oh, I don't mind him seeing you! It's the trouble it might make, the difficulties."

The faintest color came into her cheeks, like the shadow of a pale, red flower on smooth water.

"I haven't disliked you," she said, "for six or seven years; I haven't thought of you with dislike. Do you believe that? But when he comes back, he'll ask questions; he'll find out. . . . Eugene's . . . father."

Looking at her he began to laugh softly and her expression became one of surprise.

"Don't get angry," he said at last. "But isn't this a very absurd complication? I don't know just why it amuses me. But as for *him*—Eugene's 'father' is very remote to me, Louise. I can't imagine him. I can't get a picture of him. What's he like? Who does he resemble?"

"Never mind," she said.

He leaned toward her, resting his hands on his knees. He looked straight into her face.

"You touched me a moment ago—when you said you didn't dislike me. You surprised me too."

"But it's been eleven years; since we've seen each other."

"Yes, eleven years."

"And that many years changes one's ideas. You shouldn't be surprised!"

They were suddenly closer; an almost ponderable atmosphere of intimacy seemed to enfold them; they were unexpectedly in sympathy. The room appeared withdrawn and somehow aloof for them, separated from the street and the house and subject no longer to the echoes of alien concerns, as if it were a chamber in a remote, wide place, found only for their communion. They were smiling at each other.

He had a memory then of their for-

mer companionship and their unfailing congeniality. She pleased him as before, not only with the quality he found pleasant in the shape of her face, her lips, her eyes, her hair, the movements of her pale hands, but with the consciousness of sympathy that was assured in her nearness. He forgot the circumstances and the interlude of their separation. He accepted her presence now as his reality, his waking moments; the rest was a dream.

She was glad of her courage, she was glad she had confessed, even abruptly, the disappearance of her rancour; she knew now that she was fond of him. She had sacrificed something of her pride: that gave her pleasure. She examined him and found him unchanged, for her eyes refused any significance in the physical alterations they recorded. What was essential remained without difference: it was clear to be near him.

They began to talk to each other again, questioning, answering, scarcely waiting for questions and answers. She asked him the intimate trivialities of his daily life, how he spent his mornings, his afternoons, his evenings, what were his diversions. He queried her about her own activities, recalling some of the things she used to do; were her interests now the same? As if they had agreed it, they avoided certain interrogations; he revived none of the circumstances of their parting; she told him nothing of her husband. Finally she stood up and gave him her hand.

"I can't stay any longer now," she said.

"You're going to let me come and see you?"

"Yes, if you come soon."

"Will you be at home tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow afternoon?"

"I'll come tomorrow afternoon, then."

He took her out into the hall, she passed through the door, and smiled at him as she went down the steps.

IV

HE did not drink with his friends that night; he delivered his hours to musing, to memories deliberately recalled. He thought of Louise before he had married her, when her white charm almost frightened him, and he feared to tell that he loved her. He recalled the two years after their marriage, the notable two years—and that brought him to their catastrophe. He saw, nebulously, the parenthetical black-eyed girl that had bemused him for a week; her face, strangely enough, was of all the most elusive. She should have been only an incident; a year later she would have been forgotten. What an accident!—Louise's discovery! He remembered his shame, not the shame of commission, but that of being found out. And his wife's pale fury, her inflexible tragic resolve! He remained in his rooms until after midnight, thinking of these things.

He awoke late the following morning, but the few hours until after lunch drew out long. He looked at his watch a hundred times. He tried a dozen devices to put the slow seconds behind him; he looked in four or five different books, wrote several letters, searched through a box of old papers and wondered why he had saved them. Finally, he went out to get something to eat. Then he returned—and prepared to visit Louise.

He felt a little foolish as he left his rooms, but that, he believed, was a corollary of feeling young again. There was not far to walk. Her street was reached and he slackened his pace; he watched two vociferous small boys scrambling on the sidewalk, he paused to observe a colored servant polishing a doorknob, he looked into the cart of a huckster standing at the kerb—but he came to her house at last. He hesitated to mount the steps, he hesitated to ring the bell. . . . A maid answered the

door and he was taken into the parlor.

In a moment Louise entered, he stood up, she took his hand and pressed it, she was smiling at him.

"I'm glad you came early," she said.

"Am I too early?"

"No, no! We want to have a long talk. You must go, too, before Eugene comes back from school."

He glanced about the room, and saw a piano at the further end.

"Do you still play?" he asked.

"You remember my playing! Yes, I play about the same as ever!"

"Do you recollect the waltz I used to like: you got so tired of playing it for me. I can't think of the name."

She laughed, she took him by the hand.

"Come over here," she said, "see if this is what you mean."

Seated at the piano, she began the rhythmic movement of her fingers over the keys. It was the air he liked, and she played it again, after eleven years of silence. The years were gone; they were the old companions, the old intimates again. He stood standing beside her, watching her white, moving fingers, raising his eyes from these to her bent profile, to her sunlight hair. He breathed in the subtle transpiration of a perfume.

She stopped, the room was silent, she looked up at him.

"That piece is like an old scrap book," she said. "It recalls all sorts of things."

He did not know what to say, and stood a little awkwardly beside her.

"Don't you think so?" she asked.

Without waiting for his answer she stood up and took a photograph from the top of the piano, she put it in his hands mutely. He stared at it uncomprehending, observing a large man, handsome, moustached, heavy-browed, assured. He interrogated her with a look.

"That's my husband," she said.

For a moment the photograph made this remote man almost real, but still he could not conceive a flesh and blood image of him. He gave her back the picture and she returned it to its place.

"Shall I tell you about him?" she asked. "Sit down here beside me!"

He seated herself on the bench with her; his hand touched her dress; he wanted to caress her.

"He's good to me," she said. "He's away most of the time—I don't care what he does when he's away. Do you believe that? I've become different, haven't I? I . . . I don't like him, much. . . ."

"No, you're no different."

"I'm the same to you?"

Her face was turned to him, her head fell back a little, and under the slightly parted line of her lips the jewelled edges of her teeth made a nacre curve. Her hair pressed against the back of her neck, seeming to effloresce from the white column like a yellow flower. Her hands lay in her lap; he took them in his own. She moved toward him, their lips met, he kissed her. She freed her hands and drew him close with her arms; she returned his kiss with her own.

"Do you still think of me?" she murmured. "Do you love me? Have you always thought of me?"

He told her he had, but a second after his lips had said the words, it surprised him to realize that this was untrue. No, he had forgotten her, he had forgotten the savour of her kisses, the touch of her pale hands, the smooth line of her cheeks as he drew the tips of his fingers across them, the silken texture of her fustic hair pressed against his palms. Now only she revived the memories of these, the tingle of old delights.

"I never forgot you for a moment," she said. "I wanted to send for you and couldn't. Why did you ever believe me? Why did you let me lose you?"

She waited for no answer, but

kissed him again. She held him close to her, like a mother her lost child. She imprisoned him in her arms, pushed her fingers through his hair; her breath blew out moistly against his cheek. He was astonished at her sudden ardour and felt somehow helpless to give back her warmth. He endeavoured to return her caress, but her eager lips were too quick for his response. He felt in a way breathless, hopelessly outrun, left irretrievably to the rear.

"You won't leave me again?" she asked.

He stared into her wide azure eyes.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand what I mean! I don't care anything about *him*! Let him come home; he won't find me here. I'll go wherever you say! I'll be ready tomorrow, I'll go with you any time! Aren't we the same lovers?"

He said yes, he was glad to be saved further speech by the seal of her lips. A little clock on the mantle struck the hour in strokes of a silver bell. She drew away from him suddenly.

"You must go now!" she exclaimed. "Eugene will be home any minute. We must think what we will do with him. Come to me tomorrow with your plans, my lover!"

V

SHE took him to the door and he went out into the street with her whispered good-bye repeating itself again and again in his ears. A strange levity possessed him, it seemed—diffused from his feet to his head; he had the curious sensation of walking on something yielding and light. He reached his house and went up to his rooms. Clothes were lying about in disorder as he had left them; opened books were scattered on his table; yellowed old papers protruded from a box.

"Damn those things!" he said. "I'll have to burn them!"

He sat down in a chair near the win-

dow. Strangely, he was greatly tired, physically weary. He stretched out his legs, he sighed. He pressed his palms against his forehead and stared out at the quiet street. A passing woman glanced up at him; he frowned.

Finally he stood up, but he was still unrested. Without a consciously framed thought, but nevertheless purposefully, he went over to his trunk and opened it. He began packing in his clothes, his papers, his books. Once he paused before he put in his writing paper.

"No, I won't write her a letter," he decided. "What could I say?"

He went on with his labors. The squares of the windows became dusk, the street lamps flared up, his long shadow was projected across the carpet. At last he closed down the lid of the trunk and went out.

He walked to his rathskeller and descended the steps. Inside he was greeted vociferously. The Commodore eyed him with eagerness.

"What the devil's been wrong with you?" he called. "Afraid to come around any more? Well, I'll trim you in a little game tonight!"

He began to smile sadly.

"I'll just trim *you*," he said. "This will be my last chance, old man."

"What do you mean?"

He told them then; he was going back West tomorrow.

"Somehow I don't like it in the East," he said.

Like a counterpoint to his thoughts their expostulations moved through his mind. He would be sorry to leave these fellows. He sighed; a strong melancholy stirred him, a deep regret for the gone and irretrievable moved him, the regret of a woman for her passed charm, of a singer for his vanished skill, of an old poet for his first dreams.

It was an unhappy thing to admit—but he was getting too old to be a lover.



THE SEAMSTRESS

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

EACH morning through my little gate
She bears some fairy dream of dress;
Her feet come shining with their freight
Of joyful eagerness.

And with two hands that seem to smile
Along the silken garment's hem,
She tells her stitches all the while
The hope she has for them.

The sun, that ardent fellow, long
Stays marveling upon her hair,
Her needle is a silver song
That quivers in the air.

Till evening folds her task away,
And home she threads the brooding street,
Her color dying like the day
And weights upon her feet.

ONE AND ONE MAKE TWO

By Walter Vogdes

ETHEL MERTON was somewhat like her name; a good office type, blonde and blue eyed, gracious to her employers and sharp to the office boy. She had a warm cheek and nimble, business-like fingers.

She was happy in her work, but she often felt that something was lacking. She had yearnings and dreams, and she often became terribly lonely at twilight.

One morning, as Ethel opened her desk, she saw a strange young man in the main office talking to the boss. She guessed that the young man was the new chief clerk and she began to make calculations. She made them almost unconsciously. He was rather good looking; he looked a hustler, too. His salary would be a hundred and fifty a month; yes, they could do on that if she worked until he got his raise. They would take a little house in the suburbs, or perhaps an apartment in town. They would dine out twice a week, perhaps, and do one theater. And—

Just then the boss came over and said:

"Miss Merton, this is Mr. Dwan, the new chief clerk. You'll please take orders from him."

Ethel looked up cordially and told Mr. Dwan that she was pleased to meet him. He gave her a fairly interested look and said he hoped that they'd get on.

When Ethel went home that night she went over her plans in detail. They were really old plans, but now she had someone to fit to them.

She was delightfully frank and unaffected with Fred Dwan and they got along splendidly. He was rather carefully businesslike with her, but Ethel

thought she saw through that. He couldn't hide a sudden keen look that would come at times when his eyes fixed for a brief moment on her throat or the rather low V of her blouse. Ethel never saw the look, but she knew it was there.

In the course of office events Fred invited her out to dinner. That happened one evening when she had worked overtime. She received no extra pay for it from the company; the company was large, wealthy and important, and naturally it never paid stenographers for overtime.

After dinner they went to a movie, and after the movie they walked to Ethel's home. On the way Fred told her his ideas about life. They were good, sound newspaper ideas and they embraced religion, politics and business. Fred said that a man was a fool not to get on in business and that he was no fool.

Ethel agreed; she felt that he and she would get along splendidly. As he enlarged on the ideas that have put our civilization on its excellent working basis Ethel scarcely heard what he said, but she felt a delightfully warm and cozy sensation steal over her. She felt near to him.

He did not kiss her good night, and, as Ethel looked back over the evening, she was rather glad he hadn't. It showed his respect for her. The next time, she thought, they would talk of love and marriage, and he would voice his theories.

And the next time he *did* talk of love and marriage. He thought they were both splendid things. Especially love. And Ethel talked, too, and again she

felt that warm, contented, near feeling. And he *did* kiss her good night.

There may be girls who think that a man's kiss means a promise to marry, but Ethel wasn't one of them. However, she did think that it meant a definite step forward in her relations with Fred Dwan. He'd find it more difficult to be impersonal with her after the kiss. So she reasoned after he had left her.

But Ethel was wrong. It was rather curious the way he managed to hold the impersonal attitude. He really seemed to take a step backward after the kiss. A week passed and he did not invite her to go to dinner or to a movie.

Ethel was piqued. She began to study ways and means. There were two ways; she might throw herself at him, and take a chance on his chivalry, or she might simulate indifference. These are both good ways, as all readers of literature know.

After considering his chivalry and that side of the problem, she decided on indifference. It was the more womanly way, and, if it were successful, so much more satisfying.

So she remained courteous, but she gave him a chance to see that she didn't care. She didn't write letters to herself in a masculine hand, and she didn't go out with other men and mention them casually to him. She didn't know any other men. She might have lied to him and pretended that there were other men, but she didn't have the courage or the imagination or the wickedness to do that. She just smiled and put on a little indifferent attitude that sometimes became rather stiff and set.

It was a pitiable performance, and one night she went home and cried for an hour, as she realized her failure. After the cry she sat up on her bed and tried to plan.

Should she ask him to take her out? Should she throw herself at him, should she make him take her home, and then throw her arms about his neck and kiss him and beg him to love her? That's

what her heart called to her to do; it was the open thing to do, but at the thought of it all her womanliness reared to its full height and shrieked:

"If you can't win him in the decent, underhanded way, let him go!"

The ache in her heart was sharp and new to her. She wanted love, and there was no love. Only a faraway young man, who bowed courteously, and remarked that he was no fool about business.

With a little sigh Ethel rose and undressed slowly. She slept through tumultuous dreams and clothed herself in the morning with weary, nervous fingers. She had to slap the color into her face before she left the room.

She went through the day mechanically. But the next night she slept well and when she arose she did not have to slap the color into her cheeks. She even smiled at herself in the mirror.

When she reached her desk Fred Dwan and another young man were in the boss's office. Ethel stole a look at the young man, saw that he was well set up and that he looked a hustler. She was not taken completely by surprise when Fred brought him over to her desk and said:

"Miss Merton, this is Mr. Hart. Mr. Hart is the new chief clerk." And, turning to the young man, "You'll find Miss Merton an excellent stenographer."

"You leaving?" said Ethel.

"Yes, western branch," answered Fred.

When Fred had gone, and Ethel had collected her thoughts, she began to let her glances stray toward the new chief clerk. He undoubtedly was a likable young man. About the middle of the afternoon she brought her precious plans out for inspection. Of course they could do on a hundred and fifty a month if she worked until he got his raise. One theater a week, and perhaps two dinners out. . . . She had a faint sense of humor and she smiled a bit just then.

MRS. DRAINER'S VEIL

By Howard Mumford Jones

IF the house had been merely shabby I doubt whether I would have been interested. Every residence section has its shabby houses, monuments to departed aspirations, falling into slow decay in the midst of weedy yards, sometimes uninhabited and sometimes sheltering one or two members of the family who apparently have been left, like the ancient furniture, to be forgotten. The paint cracks and peels, the windows fall into impossible angles or are boarded up, the porches sag, the chimneys lose a brick or two and come in time to look like stumps of teeth. By and by the whole structure seems to sink into the grass under the burden of its neglect, and only a faint tenacity, a melancholy inertia keeps it from crumbling altogether. Then suddenly the inhabitants die, the neighbors awake to a sudden sense of change, and that is all.

The Drainger house was such a house, but it was more. It was mysterious, uncommunicative. In the midst of the commonplace residence block, with its white cottages, its monotonous lawns and uninteresting gardens, the contrast was startling, secretive, contemptuous. The tall grass waved ironically at the neat grassplots which flanked it. The great untrimmed elms sent branches to beat against the decaying shingles, or downward into the faces of passers-by, with patrician indifference to the law. They had, indeed, the air of ragged retainers, haughty and starving, and yet crowding about the house as if to hide the poverty of their master from the eyes of the vulgar. City ordinances required the laying of cement walks; the rotting boardwalk in front of the Drainger mansion was al-

ready treacherous, and no one complained.

The building itself was extraordinary. Built in the days when Crosby had been a lumber town and building material had consequently been cheap, its pretensions were immense. A tall, six-sided tower occupied two-thirds of the front, an elaborate affair, crowned by rusty ironwork in lieu of battlements. Windows were inserted at appropriate intervals, suggesting a donjon keep or a page from Walter Scott. The heavy brown shutters were never opened. There was a grim angularity to the deep porch below, a military cut to the bare front door which added to the forbidding character of the place. Behind this imposing front the rest of the building lay like the parts of a castle, each portion a little lower than the preceding. There were four of these sections, like four platforms, their flat roofs crowned with further rusty ironwork. The windows were infrequent and all barred, and a massive elm to the east of the house threw over them a gloomy and impenetrable shade. Although the whole building had been painted brown, time and the weather had combined to make it almost black, the only patch of color being the rich green of the mossy shingles on the roof of the porch.

I had first noticed the Drainger house because of its oddity. Then I was impressed by its air of speechless and implacable resentment. So far as I could observe it was empty; no foot disturbed the rank grass or troubled the dismal porches. The windows were never thrown open to the sunlight. The front door, in the month I had spent in Cros-

by, remained locked. I had once observed a grocery wagon standing in front of the house, but this, I assumed, was because the driver wished to leave his horse in the shade.

Proceeding homeward one night to my cousin's, Mark Jedfrey, with whom I was spending the summer, I was startled, when I came in front of the Drainger place, to see a light in the front window of the tower on the ground floor. It was moonlight, and the heavy shadows sculptured the old mansion into fantastic shapes, revealing a barred window inscrutably facing the moon, carving the top of the house into gargoyles of light and throwing the porch into Egyptian darkness. The light through the shutter of the window was therefore as unexpected as a stab. I paused without knowing it. Apparently I was observed; there was a light sound of footsteps from the invisible porch and the creaking, followed by the shutting, of the front door. Immediately afterwards the light was extinguished.

The person who had been on the porch had moved so quickly and so quietly, and the street, drenched in the July moonlight, seemed so still, that I wondered a moment later whether to credit my senses. At any rate, it was not my business, I concluded, to stand staring at a strange house at one o'clock in the morning, and I resumed my walk home.

A week later, a change in the routine of my daily life made me a regular visitor in the neighborhood. Twice a day I passed the Drainger house. In the morning it seemed to resist the genial sunlight, drawing its hedge of shade trees closer about it and remaining impervious to all suggestions of warmth. And on my return from the office in the evening it was as sealed, as autumnal as ever. The pleasant sounds of human intercourse, the chatting of women on the steps or the whirr of lawn-mowers should, I fancied, at least unshutter a window or burst open a frigid door. But the warm impulses of neighborhood life, like the cries of the boys at

their evening game of baseball, broke unheeded against that clifflike impassivity. No one stirred within; no one, not even the paper boy, dared to cut across the front yard; and a pile of yellowing bills on the front steps testified to the unavailing temerity of advertisers.

There was nothing to show I had not dreamed the episode of the light, as I had begun to think of it. I could have made inquiries—Helen, Mark's wife, knows everybody—but I did not. I could have consulted the directory. But I preferred to keep the house to myself. I had a secret sense of proprietorship (I am, I suppose, a romantic and imaginative soul) and I preferred that the mystery should come to me. My alert devotion must, I thought, have its reward. Indeed, my daily walks to and from my work took on the character of a silent duel between the expressionless walls and my expressionless face, and I was not going to be beaten in taciturnity.

One Friday morning, well into August, I was surprised and curious to see a woman standing under the elms in the front of the Drainger mansion. The neighborhood was, for the moment, deserted. I concealed my eagerness under a mask of impassivity. I thought myself masterly as, pretending an interest in nothing, I yet watched the place out of the tail of my eye. Imagine my increasing surprise to observe that as I approached, the person in question came slowly down to the junction of her walk with the sidewalk, so that, as I drew near we were face to face.

"You are Mr. Gillingham?" she asked.

I stopped mechanically and raised my hat. I visit Crosby regularly, where I am well known, so that I was not surprised to be thus accosted by one who was a stranger to me. She was about forty, obviously a spinster, and clad in a costume not merely out-of-date, but so far out-of-date as to possess a false air of theatricalism. I can best describe her (I am not clever in matters of dress) by saying that, with the ex-

ception that she was not wearing a hoopskirt, she appeared to have stepped out of *Godey's Lady Book*. A Paisley shawl was wrapped tightly around her head, although the morning was warm, and its subdued brilliance clashed oddly with the faded lemon of her dress. Her face was small, the features regular, but her complexion was more than sallow, it was yellow, the yellow of dying grass and sunless places. A spot of rouge glared on either cheek, and, with her eyes, which were black and brilliant, gave her face the look of fever. Her dark hair, just visible under the shawl, deepened the hectic quality of her features, although, as a matter of fact, she was not ill.

"You are a lawyer?" she continued, her brilliant eyes searching my face, I thought with some boldness, and without waiting for an answer she said, "Come," and walked abruptly toward the house.

I followed her. On the porch we paused; my companion turned and searched the street, which was still empty, a fact which seemed to increase her satisfaction, and without giving me a glance, unlocked the front door with a key which she was carrying.

II.

SHE led me into the house and through two of the rooms into a third before we paused. The transition from sunlight to darkness had been too rapid for my eyes, so that, for some moments I could only stand ridiculously in the middle of the room. I was conscious of the presence of a third person—intensely conscious—and exceedingly uncomfortable. My conductor busied herself pushing forward a chair which, fortunately, she placed under the shuttered window. To this I stumbled.

"You are a lawyer?" asked a voice from the darkness.

I was startled.

The voice sprang from the corner I was facing as though it were a live thing that had seized upon me. It was the voice of a woman, of great age

apparently, and yet it possessed a fierce, biting energy that no amount of years could weaken.

"This is Mr. Gillingham," said my conductor with, I thought, a shade of asperity. "Of course he's a lawyer."

To this there succeeded a silence, broken only by the sibilant drawing in of the younger woman's breath.

"I am indeed a lawyer," I said at length. "In what way can I be of service?"

"We see no one," said the imperious voice abruptly. "You must therefore pardon the manner in which I have had you called in."

I was now able to discern something through the gloom.

The speaker sat in extreme shadow. Her dress was a blur in the darkness, faintly outlining her person, which seemed to be of medium height, though in the great chair she looked shrunken and huddled together. Her eyes, faint points of light, were steadfastly fixed on mine, but her face was, I thought, in such deep shadow that I could not make it out.

But the concentration points, so to speak, were not her eyes, but her hands. They lay in her lap motionless, and yet they were extraordinarily alive. Even in that light their emaciated condition testified to her extreme age; but they were not decrepit, they seemed to glow with a steady light, an inward and consuming energy.

"You may leave us, Emily," said the voice, and Emily, who had been hovering with what I somehow felt to be a hint of malice, unwillingly withdrew. The other closed her eyes until the shutting of the door assured us of privacy.

"I am dying," she began suddenly in her strange, impersonal manner.

"Do not interrupt me," she added coldly as I was about to utter some inanity. "I desire to be certain of one thing while there is time, namely, that my wishes respecting the disposition of my body shall be respected—in every particular."

Her manner indicated nothing out of

the ordinary. She might have been speaking of the merest commonplace.

"You are a lawyer. How can I so arrange that the directions I will leave must be carried out after my death?"

"Ordinarily," I managed to stammer, "directions in such matters when given to the heirs, have the binding force—"

There was a second's pause.

"That is not what I wish," continued the inflexible voice. "I wish to compel attention to my instructions."

"A provision can be inserted in your will," I said at length, "which would make the inheritance of your property conditional upon the fulfillment of your wishes."

She seemed to consider this. Her hands moved slightly in her lap.

"And if those conditions were not fulfilled?"

"Your estate would go elsewhere as you might direct."

There was a prolonged pause. Her eyes disappeared, and try as I would, I could not distinguish her face. Her hands shifted, and she spoke.

"Step to the door and call my daughter. I am Mrs. Drainger."

I might have been the servant. I arose and groped my way toward the door. She neither offered me any direction as to its location, nor commented upon the gloom in which I hesitated.

I reached the door and, opening it, was about to call, when I was aware of Miss Drainger's presence; she seemed to have materialized, a pale specter, out of the dusk, and I was again conscious of vague malice.

"Your mother wished me to call you," I said, holding the door open.

Her strange eyes searched mine for a brief moment as she entered the room.

Suddenly Miss Drainger, poised in the gloom over her mother's chair, seemed to my startled sense like a monstrous pallid moth. The impression, though momentary, was none the less vivid. I felt choked, uncomfortable. An instant only, and Mrs. Drainger's voice recalled me to my senses.

She gave directions for the bringing

of a box containing some documents she wished. Miss Drainger said nothing, but turned abruptly, gave me another sidelong glance and left the room.

In the time she was absent neither of us spoke. The strange woman in the corner shrank, it seemed to me, deeper into the dusk, until only her extraordinary hands remained; and I sat in my uncomfortable and ancient chair, the little streaks of sunlight from the blind making odd patterns on my legs and hands.

The return of the daughter with a tin box which she placed in my hands was followed by an extraordinary moment. I became, if I did not deceive myself, increasingly conscious of a silent struggle going on between the two. Mrs. Drainger, in her biting, inflexible voice, again requested her daughter to leave us. Emily demurred and in the interval that followed I had a sense of crisis. Nay, I fancied more; upon hearing Emily's brief protest Mrs. Drainger slowly clenched her hands, and the movement was as though she were steadily bending her daughter's will to her purpose. At length, with the same sibilant in-taking of the breath I had observed before, Emily turned and swept through the door, her face unusually yellow, the little spots of rouge on her cheeks burning sullenly.

The box she had given me contained a will made by Mrs. Drainger, together with a few securities totalling no great value, and other less important documents. This will she now directed me to modify so that the inheritance of the property upon her death would be conditional upon the fulfillment by the heir of certain conditions which she said she would indicate in writing.

I asked why those conditions could not now be indicated.

"You are all alike," she said bitterly. "All alike in your curiosity. I prefer to put them in writing."

I assured her of the inviolability of her confidence and rose.

"Stay," she commanded. "If that girl asks you any impertinent questions send her to me."

Her hands moved quickly as she spoke. The concentration of her voice alarmed me so that I could think of nothing to say. I bowed and withdrew. It was only when I was once outside the room that I recalled, curiously enough, at no time during my interview had I seen Mrs. Drainger's face.

Miss Emily was not visible. I was about to search for the street door when, in her usual extraordinary manner, she appeared out of the gloom.

"What did she want?" she demanded, almost fiercely, her eyes holding me as though they were hands.

I explained as best I could why I could not tell her.

"Humph!" she ejaculated, and without further speech led me to the door.

"There will be fees, I suppose," she said contemptuously, staring at her hand upon the doorknob. "Do not expect much. You are the only person who has entered this house for a year."

I was embarrassed how to reply.

"Poverty is like contagion. People flee from it," she added with a mirthless laugh, and opened the door.

I bade her farewell. She stared at me, a shrewd look in her black eyes, but said nothing. The instant I was on the porch the door was shut and locked behind me.

III.

ON my way to Jeffrey's office I could not shake off my unfavorable impression of Miss Drainger. I assured myself again and again that the oddity of their manner of life was sufficient reason for her peculiarities, and yet the same picture of her kept recurring to my mind—a vision of her flitting to and fro in that great house like a monstrous evil moth. I imagined her pale face with its spots of rouge and her lemon dress so unlike any costume I had ever seen. I pictured her materializing, as I phrased it, out of the shadows; hovering expectantly (I knew not why) over the gaunt form in the great chair by the window; or peering out of the unopened shutters as she

moved from room to room. I positively grew ashamed of myself for my fancies.

The following morning a square, yellowed envelope (everything about that place seemed to lack freshness), addressed in the fine, regular hand of a generation ago, caught my eye in the heap of mail, and putting aside more important matters, I at once opened it. The note was from Mrs. Drainger, evidently written in her own hand, and contained the provision I was to insert in the will. It was sufficiently queer. She desired that upon her death no one should venture to see her face, which would be covered, she wrote, by a thick veil, and she was particularly anxious that her daughter Emily should respect her wishes. Otherwise her property was to go elsewhere.

The energy and clarity exhibited by the old lady on the previous day forbade any notion that this preposterous idea sprang from a mind touched by the infirmities of age, and yet her stipulation was so peculiar, so irrational that I pondered long over my duty in the case. What Mrs. Drainger wanted was, in one sense, absurdly simple—merely the revision of her will, scarcely more than the retyping of that simple document; but I was conscious of a deeper demand; as though, to the support of her desires, she had called in my person upon the assurance, even the majesty of the law. I could not justify her breaking of what I instinctively took to be a determined habit of seclusion except by postulating deeper issues than I saw on the surface. There was no reason why I should not revise the document and be done with it; queerer provisions have been made in other wills. Yet, to make the inheritance conditional upon so strange a request might be unfair to Miss Drainger. It was true, I distrusted her; but that was not to the point, and this provision was one that she would have every natural incentive to break.

A further thought occurred—there might be other children not known to me who would expect some share in the modest estate; finding the property

willed to Emily upon so tenuous a provision, they might easily charge that that provision had been broken, when proof and disproof would be equally difficult, and Mrs. Drainger's wish that her companion (despite her singular testament) be her sole heir would then not be met. The will simply provided that, should Emily forfeit her right to the property the estate should go to a local charity; no mention was made of other children; but this silence did not disprove their existence.

I was too well aware of the ease with which so singular a document could be attacked in court, not to be uneasy. I resolved finally again to consult my client (if the name could attach to so imperious a lady) and briefly announcing my absence to Mark Jedfrey, I sought the Drainger residence.

The old house looked as deathlike as ever. It seemed incredible that human existence could be possible within its sunless walls. Indeed, my persistent efforts at the rusty bell-handle produced only a feeble echo, and the round-eyed interest of a group of urchins, who volunteered, after a time, that nobody lived there. I was beginning to agree with them when a key was turned in the lock and the weather-beaten door yielded a few cautious inches. Miss Emily looked out at me.

"It's you," she said ungraciously, and seemed rather to hope that I would disappear as at the uttering of a charm.

"I wish to see your mother," I said.

She hesitated. At length, opening the door scarcely enough to admit me, she bade me enter, and disappeared. The house was as dismal as ever.

"Come in here," she said, appearing after her usual sudden fashion in a dim doorway and looking more like a wraith than ever.

Her eyes burned me as I walked cautiously into the other room.

It was one I had not seen, but Mrs. Drainger was seated, as before, in the obscurest corner, a blur of white in which her pale hands looked like pallid lumps of flame. I faced my invisible client.

"I have come about the will," I began, and was immediately conscious of Miss Emily's voracious interest. The opening was, as I recognized too late, scarcely diplomatic.

"Will?" said the daughter in a harsh voice. "You are making a will? You—you—"

She looked enormously tall and unpleasant as she spoke.

"Yes, my dear," responded Mrs. Drainger dryly.

"You? You?" continued the daughter rapidly. "After all these years? It is incredible. It is incredible." She laughed unpleasantly with closed eyes.

Then, conscious that she was betraying emotions not meant for me, she turned to my chair. "You will understand that the information is something of a shock for a daughter. My mother's condition—"

"Mrs. Drainger," I ventured to interrupt, "wishes merely to make certain changes in an instrument already drawn up." I was conscious of a stir, whether of gratitude or of resentment, from the darkened corner.

Emily seemed momentarily bewildered.

"You frightened me," she said at length with a frankness palpably false.

"I quite understand," I retorted, the sham being, I thought, tolerably obvious. "And now if your mother and I—"

She took the hint.

"I will leave you," she said.

It was evident I had not won her gratitude.

As the door closed behind her I heard a low sound from Mrs. Drainger.

"I am afraid—afraid," she murmured weakly. I think forgetting my presence; and then, as if suddenly conscious of a slip:

"Old women, Mr. Gillingham, have their fancies. Death seems at times uncomfortably close."

I murmured some polite deprecation, but I was sure it was not death that frightened her.

Drawing from my pocket her letter

and the copy of the will I had prepared I explained as best I could why I had come. I was tolerably confused. I could not question her entire sanity, and as I did not wish in any way to hint at what I felt concerning Emily I soon involved myself in a veritable dust of legal pedantry. Finally I asked whether there were other children.

Mrs. Drainger heard me out in ironic silence.

"I have no others," she admitted at length, and added after a second, "Thank heaven!"

"There remains only one other matter," I said. "The provisions of your will are such that unless she knows them in advance Miss Emily will almost inevitably forfeit the inheritance."

"I am aware of that," said the voice, and the pale hands moved imperceptibly. "I am quite well aware of what I am doing, Mr. Gillingham, and I repeat, my daughter is not to ask impertinent questions."

I bowed, somewhat ruffled. I added that it would be necessary to witness her signature in the usual manner. She seemed surprised to learn that two persons were necessary, and remained silent.

"Call Emily," she directed.

"Emily will not do," I objected, "since she is a possible beneficiary."

"I am aware," she responded coldly. "Call Emily."

Emily, being summoned, was directed to procure the presence of a Mrs. Mueller, living near by, who occasionally helped with the work. She seemed unusually tractable and departed on her errand without comment.

For some three or four minutes Mrs. Drainger did not speak. I could not, of course, see her face; but once or twice her hands shifted in her lap, and I thought she was perturbed. My own conversational efforts had been so uniformly unfortunate that I concluded to remain silent.

"You will see an old, worn woman," she said musingly. "But it does not matter."

The entrance of Miss Emily followed by that of a stout, comfortable German woman prevented the necessity of a reply. I explained what was wanted; Emily assisted me in making it clear to Mrs. Mueller, and then withdrew to the door, where she assumed an attitude of disinterestedness—too obviously assumed it, I thought.

It became necessary to have more light, and Emily went to the window and opened the shutter. I turned to where Mrs. Drainger sat, the will in my left hand, my fountain pen in the other, and in that attitude I hesitated for a brief moment of incredulity. I thought I was looking at a woman without a head.

A second's glance showed how mistaken I was. The thin, emaciated figure, clad like her daughter's, in a fashion long forgotten, was, as I had surmised, somewhat shrunken by age. Her strange hands, loosely held in her lap, were wrinkled with a thousand wrinkles like crumpled parchment, and yet, even in that crueler light, they conveyed the impression of power. They seemed like antennæ wherewith their owner touched and tested the outer world. As I sought the reason for this impression I saw that the face and head were entirely wrapped in the thick folds of a black veil, which was so arranged that the eyes alone were visible. These seemed to swim up faintly as from the bottom of a well.

My imperceptible pause of surprise drew from Emily that sudden in-taking of breath I have before remarked, and I could not but feel that she intended, as I felt, a subtle sarcasm in the sound. Accordingly I made no comment, secured Mrs. Drainger's signature without difficulty, then that of Mrs. Mueller (who, during the whole procedure, uttered no word), and added my own with as natural an air as I could manage. Miss Emily led Mrs. Mueller away and I offered the completed document to Mrs. Drainger.

"Keep it," she said with some feebleness and then, more loudly,

"I will take care. Keep it. Make

her call for it when it is time. Now let her come to me."

My search for the daughter necessitated my going through the several rooms, so that I had a tolerable notion of the house. Miss Emily's inheritance would not be great, although the lot was itself valuable. The furniture was all old and of just that antiquity which lacks value without acquiring charm. I remarked a vast what-not in one corner; one table promised well, and there were one or two really fine engravings; but for the most part the upholstered chairs were shabby, the tables and desks old and cracked, and the carpets of a faded elegance. The kitchen into which I passed was notably bleak, and the decrepit wood-stove seemed never to have held a fire.

Miss Drainger came in the back entrance as I entered the kitchen. Her face was paler than I had ever seen it. She confronted me silently.

"If you are through," she said biting-ly, "I will let you out the front door."

I observed mildly that her mother wanted her and accompanied her into the sitting room. I hesitated how best to broach the matter I had in mind without giving offense, and resolved, unfortunately, on a deliberate lie.

"My fee has been paid," I said, awkwardly enough.

She searched my face. I affected to be busy with my hat.

"I see," she commented with a short, cynical laugh. "Sometimes it is done that way, sometimes in ways less pleasant. We are quite used to it. I suppose I had better thank you."

I felt my face flush scarlet.

"It is not necessary," I faltered and was grateful to get out of the house without further blunders.

I filled my lungs with the sweet August morning in positive relief, feeling that I had been in the land of the dead.

IV

I HAD no further contact with the Draingers for some days. Indeed, the whole curious episode was beginning to fade in my mind when some three weeks

later, a dinner that Helen was giving recalled my experience and added fresh interest to my relations with them. I sat next to one of those conventionally pretty women who require only the surface of one's attention, and I was preparing to be bored for the rest of the evening when I caught a chance remark of Isobel Allyn's.

Mrs. Allyn (everybody calls her Isobel) was talking across the table to Dr. Fawcett.

"You've lost your mysterious veiled lady," she said.

"Yes," said Fawcett.

Fawcett is a good fellow, about forty-five, and inclined to be reticent.

"Veiled lady?" shrilled some feminine nonentity, much to Fawcett's distaste. "How thrilling! Do tell us about it!"

"There is nothing to tell," growled Fawcett.

Isobel, however, is not easily swept aside.

"Oh, yes, there is," she persisted.

"Dr. Fawcett has for years had a mysterious patient whose face, whenever he visits her, remains obstinately invisible. Now, without revealing her features, the lady has had the bad taste to die."

I leaned forward.

"Is it Mrs. Drainger, Fawcett?"

He turned to me with mingled relief and inquiry.

"Yes. How did you know?"

I promised myself something later and remained vague.

"I had heard of her," I said.

His eyes questioned mine.

"Everyone must have heard of her but me," came the same irritating voice.

"Aren't you going to tell us?"

"Merely a patient of mine," said Fawcett impolitely. "She has just died—at an advanced age."

It was cruel, but justified.

Isobel was penitent.

"I am sorry," she said prettily, and Helen hastily introduced the subject of automobiles, concerning which she knows very little.

I sought out Fawcett on the porch after dinner.

"About Mrs. Drainger," he said. "How did you know?"

"I am, I suppose, her lawyer—or was, rather," I explained. "I have her will."

"I thought soulless corporations and bloated bondholders were more your line."

"They are," I said, and briefly recounted how I had come to be Mrs. Drainger's attorney.

Fawcett's cigar glowed in the dark. His wicker chair creaked as he shifted his weight.

"The daughter is a curious creature," he observed slowly, "something uncanny about her, even devilish. Somehow I picture her striding up and down the shabby rooms like a lioness. The town has grown, the neighborhood changed, and I don't believe either of them was aware of it. They lived absolutely in the past. So far as I could see they hated each other—not, you understand, with any petty, feminine spite, but splendidly, like elemental beings. I never went into the house without feeling that hot, suppressed atmosphere of hate. And yet there they were, tied together, as absolutely alone as though they had been left on a deserted island.

"Tied together—I fancy that's it. Emily could, of course, have gone away. And yet I have a queer fancy, too, that so long as Mrs. Drainger wore her veil the girl could not leave; that if she had once uncovered her face the tie between them would have been broken. The old lady knew that, certainly, and I think Emily knew it, too, and I fancy she must have tried again and again to lift the covering from her mother's face. But Mrs. Drainger—she was will incarnate—was always just too much for her."

I told him about the provisions of her will.

"Ah," he said, "it is even clearer now. My theory is right. The veil was, as it were, the symbol that held them together. But now, I wonder, does the will represent the old lady's revenge, or her forgiveness?"

"We shall know shortly," I interjected.

Fawcett nodded in the dark.

"Captain Drainger built the house," he continued inconsequentially, "back in the forties for himself and his young bride, and, though it looks bleak enough now, it was for the Crosby of those days a mansion of the first class. The captain, the tradition is, was a wild, obstinate fellow with black hair and brilliant eyes (I fancy Emily has much of her father in her), and nobody was greatly surprised, when the war broke out, to have him at first lukewarm, and then avowedly a Confederate. Of course he might as well have professed atheism or free love in this locality—he might better have blown his brains out—which he practically did, anyway. Public sentiment forced him out of the state and over Mason and Dixon's line, and he entered the rebel army as a cavalry captain, and deliberately (we heard) got himself killed. Of course the Drainger fortune, fair enough for those days, went to pieces at once.

"Mrs. Drainger immediately adopted the policy of complete seclusion she was to follow ever after. When the captain left, it was said they would not speak; at any rate, she broke off her friendships, refused herself to callers, and saw nobody. Her condition served her as an excuse, but everybody knew, I guess, the real reason why she kept to herself. There, alone with an old servant who died a year or so later, she walked the floor of that mockery of a house, or sat brooding over the coming of the child. It must have been pleasant! Emily was born just before we heard of the captain's death.

"One or two of her nearest friends tried to comfort her, but she would see no one except the doctor—who, by the way, was my father. I have inherited the Draingers, you see."

Fawcett's cigar was out, but he did not light another.

"My mother, from whom I got all this, said there was something magnificent in the way Mrs. Drainger suffered, in the way she resented any intrusion

upon her self-imposed solitude. My mother was a courageous woman, but she said she was positively frightened when Mrs. Drainger, a tall, fair woman with straight, level eyes, came to the door in answer to her knock.

"You may go back, Lucy Fawcett," she said. 'A rebel has no friends,' and shut the door in my mother's mortified face.

"At first there was some grumbling and ill-natured talk, but it soon ceased. People who knew her family (she was a Merion) saw pretty clearly that Mrs. Drainger's heart had, for most purposes, stopped beating when the captain found the bullet he was looking for, and tumbled from his horse. What was left was the magnificent shell of a woman in that great shell of a house—that, and the child. I can picture her sitting upright in some great chair by the shuttered window, peering out at the rank grass and the elm trees, or else wandering, always majestic, from room to room with her baby in her arms, listening to the silence. She cut herself off from the world of the living as though she had been buried, and she tried to bring up Emily as though they were in the land of the dead.

"Emily was, of course, her only friend, her only companion, her only link with life. Tragically enough, she was to fail her. She grew up, a solitary, imperious child, I imagine much as she is now. She strikes me as being one of those unfortunate natures who are as old at twelve as they ever will be. Mother hinted at terrible scenes between the woman, like a tragedy queen, and her baby, the child stormily demanding to be like other children, the mother stonily listening and never bending her ways. The will of the mother—I grow fanciful—was like ice-cold metal, the child was hot with life, and the result was passionate rebellions, followed by long weeks of sullen silence. And always Mrs. Drainger hugged her isolation and hugged her child to that isolation because she was her father's daughter. How or on what they lived, nobody knows.

"You understand," Fawcett interposed, "that this is mainly conjecture. They were long before my day then. I am merely putting together what I heard and my own inferences from what I have seen. And it seems to me, looking back, that Mrs. Drainger set, as it were, when the captain died, into that terrible fixed mold she was to wear ever after, and the lonely child with the brilliant black eyes was not merely fighting solitude, she was beating her passionate little fists against the granite of her mother's nature. And I fancy that at an early age (she was very mature, mind), Emily came to hate her mother quite earnestly and conscientiously, and, so to speak, without meanness or malice.

"Of course it was impossible to keep the girl totally confined. She did not, it is true, go to school, but she went out more or less, and in a queer, unnatural way she made friends. That was later, however. She never went to parties, since her mother would not give any, and she was proud—all the Drainers are proud. And she had no playmates. Until she was a young woman, so far as human intercourse was concerned, Emily might as well have had the plague in the house.

"But she went out as she grew older. For instance, she went to church, not, I fancy, because she had any need of religion, but because it was a place she could go without embarrassment or comment."

There was a moment of silence as though Fawcett was pondering how to continue, and I heard the blur of voices from the hall and prayed that nobody would come.

"We lived across the street from them in those days," he resumed, "and I was a young cub from the medical school, home only at vacations. I really don't know all that happened. Indeed, it seems to me that I have known the Drainers only by flashes at any time. They were always wrapped in mysterious human differences, and even when you saw her on the street some of that surcharged atmosphere of

silence seemed to color Emily's face. She had grown up then. Her clothes were quite orthodox, and she was handsome as a leopard is handsome, but always she struck me as haunted by a vague fear, a fear of the house, perhaps, and of her mother's power to rule her. I used to fancy, watching her return to their sombre dwelling, that she was drawn back as to a spider's web by the fascination of its tragic silences. The story of her life is like a strange book read by lightning, with many leaves turned over unseen between the flashes."

"You were in love with her!" I cried.

"No," he said slowly. "I might have been, but I wasn't. You are right, though, in guessing there was love in her story, only it was not I, it was Charlie Brede who, so to speak, sprang the trap.

"She got to know him at church. Charles was an honest, ordinary, likable boy with a face like a Greek god and a streak of the most unaccountable perversity. His obstinacy was at once intense and wild. That made him interesting and, though there was no greatness behind it, any woman would have loved his face. Don't imagine, furthermore, because I have supposed they met at church, that he was narrowly pious. Everybody went to church in those days—there was nowhere else to go. Charlie was, in short, an ordinary, well-behaved youngster, except that his face hinted at possibilities he couldn't have fulfilled, and except for his dash of narrow rebellion. I don't see how, to such a stormy creature as Emily, he could have been bearable.

"The affair had got well along when I came home in the spring. At first, I gathered from the talk, Emily had met him only away from the house (it was not home), at church or downtown, or in such ways as she could unsuspectingly contrive. Then somehow Charlie suspected something queer and insisted, in one of his obstinate fits, on his duty to call.

"I know this because they stood for a long time under the trees in front of

our house, Charles's voice booming up through the scented darkness as he argued. Emily put him off with various feminine subterfuges—she was, I remember, rather magnificent in her despairing diplomacy—and I thought for a while she would succeed. Then I heard Brede's voice, wrathful and sultry, with a quality of finality.

"If you are ashamed of me—" he said, and walked off.

"It was the one statement she could not outwit. Emily stood for a moment, then—I can imagine with what terrific surrender of pride—ran after him.

"Charlie, Charlie!" she called. He stopped. She came up to him. There was a low murmur of voices, and I thought she was crying.

"Tuesday, then," he said, and kissed her.

"Emily waited until he was well away, and in the moonlight I could see her raise her hands to her head in a gesture that might have been despair, that might have been puzzlement. Then she crossed the street into the blackness of their porch.

"Did she love him? I don't know. Do you?"

The question hung motionless in the air. Fawcett lit another cigar.

"One would have expected something regal about the man Emily Drainger should choose. You agree with me, I suspect, that she is—or was—leonine, terrific. Perhaps she was deceived by his face. Perhaps, after the manner of lovers, she found splendid lights and vistas in the Charlie Brede the rest of us considered rather ordinary. Or perhaps, since she had lived her solitary life so long, pestered and haunted by her mother, any pair of lips would have awakened in her the same powerful and primitive impulses. He was her man, and she wanted him, and she was not to get him. I have even thought that she did not love him at all: that she was quite willing to feign a passion in order to escape from that terrible mother with her eyes forever focused on her tragedy, her mother, and that gaunt, grim house. I am superstitious

about that house. Nothing good can come out of it. It warped Mrs. Drainger out of all semblance to human nature, and it was warping Emily, and Mrs. Drainger was somehow the presiding genius, the central heart of that sinister fascination.

"Charlie called that Tuesday night, I know, because I stayed home to see. I was quite unashamed in doing so. He had, I must say, courage. But he did not see Emily. There were two chairs on the porch, and, to the enormous surprise of the neighborhood, which had not seen Mrs. Drainger for years, she occupied one of those chairs and Charlie the other, and, after a fashion, they conversed. I could not hear what they said, but there was in Mrs. Drainger's calm, in her placid acceptance of the situation, a quality of danger. I had an impulse to cry out. She made me think of a steel instrument ready to close. And, as Charlie had an obstinate streak in him, it became fairly evident that we were witnessing a duel—a duel for the possession of Emily Drainger. Mute obstinacy was pitted against will, and Emily, enchained and chafing, was permitted only to stand by.

"Considered from Mrs. Drainger's point of view, she was not, I suppose, so hideously unfair. One doesn't shut off the last ray of light from the prisoner's dungeon or grudge clothing to a naked man. And her daughter was, as I have intimated, her only link with the living. Hers was the selfishness of narrow hunger, if you will, of an almost literal nakedness. And yet one cannot live alone with the dead for twenty years and remain sane. Since Mrs. Drainger's life was to Mrs. Drainger entirely normal, she could not, in the nature of the case, imagine what she was condemning Emily to. The mother thought of Brede, I fancy, as of some spiritual calamity that would rob her of half her soul, and she brought to the issue her one power—her power of breaking people's wills, and fought him as fiercely as she would have fought the devil.

"Charlie called again Friday and had

again the pleasure of Mrs. Drainger's society. He called again next week; this time both Emily and Mrs. Drainger entertained him. The result was, I imagine, even more unsatisfactory—what Mrs. Drainger wanted. If it had not been so terrific, it would have been funny. Some of us, indeed, took to making wagers on the contest. He called repeatedly. Whether he saw Emily or not, there was always Mrs. Drainger.

"It is not her mere presence, mind, that was disconcerting. The old lady was somehow sinister in her silent intensity, in her subtle power of infiltration. Emily seemed, so far as I could see, thoroughly cowed. Strain as she would at her leash, the keeper held her, and the tedious pattern of their struggling conversation concealed bright chains. This, Mrs. Drainger seemed to say, is what you are coming to. And Charlie would look appealingly at Emily, and she at him, and they both looked at the imperturbable monster of a woman, and on Charlie's lips the desperate proposals to go somewhere, to do something, to get out of it, died before he could utter them. Only mute obstinacy held him there. Mrs. Drainger, if she could not prevent his coming, could at least hold Emily dumb.

"It lasted some four weeks. At length—what was bound to happen—the weakest snapped. A week went by, and Charlie did not come. Emily haunted the porch in an ironic appearance of freedom. Mrs. Drainger, in some subtle way, knew that she had won, that the girl was eternally hers. Emily's face was pitifully white: she was suffering. Was it love? Or was it her passionate hatred of the prison that held her, the guardian that kept her helpless?

"Then, one evening, Charlie came up the street. He looked unwell, as though the contest of wills had somehow broken him. He walked straight to the porch where Emily sat. She rose to meet him—I think she was trembling.

"Good-bye," he said, and held out his hand.

"Apparently she did not ask why he had failed her, or where he was going, or how he came so abruptly to bid her farewell. She took his hand for a moment, and, with the other, steadied herself against the chair, and so they stood looking at each other. There must have been queer lights in their eyes—desire baffled in some strange way, wounded pride, and an eating, mortal sickness. Charlie's hand dropped, he ran down the walk, crossed the street straight toward me so that I saw his white face, and walked away. We never saw him again. Emily stood watching him, perhaps hoping that he would look back. If he did there was still a possibility. But he did not, and she heard, I suppose, the iron gates clang to. She went abruptly into the house. An hour later I saw her go out, and after an interval, return."

V

THE story lay between us like a damp mist.

Fawcett seemed to have forgotten me, but my silence clung to him with mute tenacity.

"What I should know," his voice rumbled on, "I don't know—that is, of course, the scene between the two afterwards. When Emily Grainger returned to her house that night something awful happened. What it was, she alone now knows. But the next flash I had of their history came three or four years later—when I had taken up my father's practice after his death. I have said the Drainers were an inheritance; he had been called in to see Mrs. Drainger several times and on those times had seen what I saw later, but I had been away. I could not question him and he was, above everything, scrupulously exact in keeping the confidences of his patients—even with me. At any rate, I was called in to see Mrs. Drainger as my father's son. I saw for the first time that her face was entirely shrouded in the thick black veil she wore ever after; and the wearing of that veil dates, I think, from the night that Char-

lie Brede and Emily Grainger looked with baffled wonder into each other's eyes.

"Imagine living with the thing. Imagine the torture of patience, the fixity of will required to keep it eternally on. Do you know how bandages feel after a time? Think of shrouding your head for twenty years. But think also of the slow stealthiness with which the mute reproach of that shrouded face would creep into your nerves if you had to live with it; think of the imaginative persistency which saw, in this covering of the features, not merely just the tie that would hold Emily to her forever, but the tedious process of revenge for an injury not known to us, for some monstrous moment between the two that only the dull walls of the house could hear.

"Think, too, of the ingenuity of that symbol. Its very helplessness forbade to Emily the exultation of revilement. Good Heavens! It is bad enough to be tied by your own weakness to a face that you hate, but to be chained forever to that thing, to rise up with it and lie down with it, to talk to it, to insult it, to listen to it, and yet never see your sarcasms strike home! Think of hating a black veil for twenty years!

"Emily, of course, had changed. She met me at the door as she met you. She was a shell burned out by one fierce moment of fire. Something had toppled in her and collapsed, and only by the pitiless and continual irony of her silence could she hide her inward loathing. With me she was proud and acid, but in her mother's room, whither she led me, her silence was like a frightened, defensive covering which might, at any moment, be stripped from her, leaving her indecently, almost physically bare. Her pride, in sum, was broken, but not her hatred. That smoldered where before it had flamed.

"Mrs. Drainger had some minor complaint, I have forgotten what. Emily followed me into the room where she sat—she seems to me always to have been sitting with patient intensity in some corner of that house. I recall

the stab of surprise with which I searched the shadowy room for the austere and beautiful face of the Mrs. Drainger we knew, and how, in my confusion, I could see nothing but her hands. Emily mocked me with her eyes, but did not speak. Then I saw.

"I remember I asked Mrs. Drainger, for some reason, to remove the veil. I was raw in those days. Emily stiffened behind me and, I thought, started to speak, but the rigid silence of Mrs. Drainger was never broken. Her very speechlessness rebuked me. I prescribed for her and got out of the house.

"If you will believe me, Gillingham," Fawcett went on with a change of voice, "I have visited that house for twenty years and during that time Mrs. Drainger, so far as I know, has never divested herself of her veil. I got that much out of Emily. But I could get no more. She seemed to freeze when I sought after reasons. I do not know what she had done, but I do know that the wearing of that black mantle represented to them that flaming crisis in their relationship when Emily lost forever her one hope of escape.

"I have watched them for twenty years. Twenty years—think of it! They were like two granite rocks, clashed once together, and thereafter frozen into immobility. They have never changed. All pretence of affection had dropped from them—even before me. There was only naked hate. Year after weary year, seeing no one, never going anywhere, they have rasped and worn each other merely by being what they are.

"And now the ultimate ingenuity, the last refinement of unhappiness! The veil, I say, is a symbol of their shuddering cohesion which death would normally destroy. But the will of this woman, as it triumphed over life, she has made to triumph over death: if Emily removes the veil she becomes, with her lack of training, her useless equipment, a helpless beggar; if she does not remove it, if she never sees her mother's face, she will be tormented by memory, bound forever, as she

was in life, to a blank and inscrutable shawl. Is it forgiveness—or justice, mercy or revenge?"

Fawcett broke off as a swirl of guests flooded the coolness of the porch.

"I will tell you what happens," I said when I could.

"Do," he returned. "And you must take precautions."

VI

ON my way to the office next morning, it suddenly dawned on me what Fawcett meant. How, in truth, was I to ascertain whether the singular provision of Mrs. Drainger's will had or had not been met? Fawcett had not, he said, been present at the death; and even if he had been, there must elapse a considerable time in which Emily would necessarily be alone with her mother's body.

The more I pondered, the more puzzled I grew. It seemed grotesque that Mrs. Drainger should have overlooked this situation. Moreover, I was naturally curious. Fawcett's narrative justified me in all I had thought, but it had not given a motive for the veil, nor for the tenacity with which Mrs. Drainger clung to it.

The house looked unchanged as I turned into the street on which it faced. Death was, it said, of so little consequence to the walls which had immured and conquered life itself. There was in the very lack of change a great irony. A barren device of crêpe on the door, one lower window partly open—that was all. The very papers yellowing before the door had not been swept away.

Mrs. Mueller, the woman who had witnessed the signing of the will, was standing on the steps that led to the street. If my relations with the Drainers had been odd, they were to conclude as strangely. The woman was apparently expecting me, and her manner testified to recent terror.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"She told me," Mrs. Mueller said, "to get you."

Her hunted look and the solemn glance she gave me testified that *she* was as real to her as though Mrs. Drainger had not for twenty-four hours been dead. "She told me if a certain thing happened I was to call you."

Suddenly I saw. That tremendous woman was reaching at me over the very boundaries of life.

"I don't like it," continued Mrs. Mueller with an indescribable accent of fear and a sidelong look at me for support. "I don't like it. But she said the day before she died, she said, 'If Miss Emily uncovers my face when I am dead, you are to tell Mr. Gillingham,' she said. And she made me promise to watch."

She seemed to want to tell me something she could not put in words.

"It is terrible," she went on in a vague, haunted manner, "what I saw."

"What?"

"She was always a queer woman. 'If Miss Emily uncovers my face,' she said, 'you are to call Mr. Gillingham.' And she made me watch. I didn't want to. So when she died I came right over."

"How did you know when to come?"

"I don't know," she answered helplessly. "I just came. She told me Miss Emily wasn't to see me, but I was to watch. It is terrible."

We were at the door. I had a sudden distaste for the woman, though she was quite simply honest, and, as it were, the helpless and unconscious spy that Mrs. Drainger, in her grave, had set upon her daughter. I was anxious to get it over with.

"You will see," she said again and brought me into the house.

Her terror was beginning to affect me. She was quite unable to tell me what she had seen, but her whole manner expressed a dazed horror, not so much of some concrete fear as of the ghastly position in which she found herself.

She led me to the door of the room in which I had last seen Mrs. Drainger

alive, but no inducement could make her come in, nor could I get from her anything more explicit. Poor soul! I do not wonder at her terror.

The room was as before. The shuttered windows admitted only faint bars and pencils of light. The dim chairs and shadowy tables were discernible, but, as if they yielded precedence to death, the most solid object in the obscurity was the coffin in which Mrs. Drainger's body lay. I advanced to it. The mistress of this ill-fated mansion seemed to have grown larger in death; her body was no longer shrunken and her folded hands still retained faintly their peculiar luminous quality. I could see in the shadow that around her face there was no longer the black mantle, but the face puzzled me—I could not make it out, and, opening the shutter, I let in the light.

I stepped again to the side of the coffin. Could this be the queenly beauty of whom Fawcett had spoken? For, where the features should have been there was, naked to the light, only a shapeless, contorted mass of flesh in which, the twisted eyelids being closed, there seemed to my horrified gaze no decent trace of human resemblance!

I turned half-sick from the sight. Emily Drainger, tall, pallid, yellow, her great eyes burning with an evil glow, her lemon dress an unhealthy splotch in the doorway, stood regarding me.

"The will—the will!" she cried. "She thought she could stop me, but she could not!"

"Who—what has done this?" I pointed involuntarily to her mother's face.

She seemed to expand before my eyes with evil triumph.

"I—I," she cried at length, her black eyes holding me as I stood, weak and faint, clinging unconsciously to the coffin for support. "*Twenty years ago!* But"—she laughed hysterically and came to look at the shapeless, brutalized face—"I never knew, until she died, that it was done so well!!"



INTIMACY

By Patience Trask

HE is a little man and his hair is coming out rapidly. He rubs tonic into it every night when he can remember it. The tonic stains the linen pillow-slips, but it seems to help his hair so that really doesn't matter.

He looks healthy enough but he has to be particular about what he eats. He won't eat lamb or mutton and oughtn't to eat much beef, though he dotes on rare steaks and it is hard to keep him from having them.

He can't wear socks that have been darned and his right foot is sensitive, a touch of rheumatism or gout, perhaps. He won't go to a doctor about it.

He used to busy himself collecting odd and rare books and had a couple of first editions. The last few years, though, he doesn't read anything but the daily papers, though he likes to pretend he keeps up with everything and is put

out if he can't pretend he knows something about every new book and author.

He is stingy about little bills, but, after he has made a lot of money, suddenly, he has bursts of generosity and buys unnecessarily hideous and expensive things for his home.

His people are rather ordinary, especially his father, who chews tobacco even when visiting relatives. His only sister is an old maid and rather a busy-body.

He snores when sleeping on his back and is annoyed when awakened and told about it.

I do not know him myself. But once in a while his wife sits next to me when I am rolling bandages for the Red Cross. . . . As for the husband of the woman who sat, yesterday, at my left. . . .



NOWHERE has man shown his shrewdness more clearly than by the fact that only one beautiful woman in a hundred ever marries well.



THERE are two classes of married women: those who are suspicious and have good cause, and those who are suspicious anyhow.



THE oaths that a man takes when marrying for the first time are always carried out to the letter—with his second wife.

IT NEVER HAPPENS

A COMEDY OF THE SOMEWHAT IMPROBABLE

By Winthrop Parkhurst

PERSONS

THE REV. JONATHAN PETERS.

WILLIAM JOHNSON.

MAGGIE, his wife (dead).

The scene is the front parlor of the JOHNSONS' home on a bright Spring morning somewhere in Massachusetts. The shades on the windows which look toward the street are carefully drawn as though to exclude from public gaze an exhibition which intelligent people know is morbidly indecent. Indeed, only a few prying rays of sunlight manage to intrude themselves between the crevices and point reproachful fingers at WILLIAM JOHNSON and his friend, the REV. JONATHAN PETERS, who sit side by side, discussing the object of death which lies motionless and pallid in its coffin, a few feet away from them at the rear. WILLIAM JOHNSON is a mild-mannered, gentle-eyed man of about forty. He has a sandy drooping moustache. The REV. JOHNSON PETERS is not more ferocious. He is dressed in clerical garb, however, and this fact lends him a certain indefinable authority. He realizes that he is not quite as other men are; and, within limits, he is willing for you to realize it, too.

JOHNSON:

(With a profound sigh.) Yes, it was very sudden—very sudden indeed. Oh, I can't believe it at all, Mr. Peters. I can't believe it at all.

PETERS:

(With unction.) You must not give way to despair like this, Mr. Johnson. You must trust in the mercy that is above.

JOHNSON:

Mercy! Do you call it mercy to have your wife struck down dead by a stroke of lightning out of the sky?

PETERS:

There are many who would call it mercy, Mr. Johnson. Many.

JOHNSON:

Eh?

PETERS:

She died a painless death, I mean. She did not suffer. Surely, that is a mercy, is it not?

JOHNSON:

Ah! I see what you mean. Yes.

PETERS:

Why, just think for a moment how she *might* have suffered, Mr. Johnson. Think how she might perhaps have contracted some fatal disease and lingered on for years and years and years. No! The Lord was good to you and her. He took her away quickly. He snatched her up into Heaven, as you might say, even as he snatched up the prophet Elijah in the days of old. Perhaps she is looking down at you now. Who knows?

JOHNSON:

(*Brightening.*) Do you think she is?

PETERS:

(*Profoundly.*) I am sure of it, sure of it.

JOHNSON:

(*With a wistful sigh.*) I wish I could be sure of it.

PETERS:

(*Reproachfully.*) My dear Mr. Johnson, are you not sure?

JOHNSON:

How can I be sure she's looking down at me when I don't even know she's above (*raising his eyes*) at all?

PETERS:

(*Scandalized.*) Mr. Johnson! Surely you do not think your dear wife is in—that is, that she has gone to—surely you do not believe *that*!

JOHNSON:

Oh, I don't think Maggie's gone to—no, no. Of course not.

PETERS:

Then—

JOHNSON:

I was just wondering where she *has* gone.

PETERS:

(*Puzzled.*) I don't understand—

JOHNSON:

I mean, I wonder if, wherever Heaven is, she's able to see me—to know all I am suffering. Do you suppose she does?

PETERS:

I am sure of it, sure of it.

JOHNSON:

Then do you really think she knows I am—sorry?

PETERS:

Two persons who loved each other as you evidently did are bound together by ties that death itself cannot sever.

JOHNSON:

Oh, it's good to hear you say that. It gives me hope. It gives me courage. It gives me life.

PETERS:

(*Placing his hand on Johnson's shoulder.*) That is the way you must feel, Mr. Johnson. You must always look upward and forward. You must not allow your grief to bear you to the ground.

JOHNSON:

I know. I try.

PETERS:

It is hard sometimes, of course—

JOHNSON:

(*With his face in his hands.*) Hard! Oh!

PETERS:

It is very hard to lose what we most dearly cherish—

JOHNSON:

(*Choking slightly.*) Don't!

PETERS:

And your grief does you credit. Depend upon it, your dear wife in Heaven knows how you feel. Every one of your tears, I am sure, is a bright jewel in the diadem of her joy. But you must learn not to give way to your sorrow too much. You must learn to master it. You must have faith that all is for the best, dark as the skies may seem to you now.

JOHNSON:

I know. Oh, I do try, Mr. Peters. But it's so hard. Only yesterday morning, only yesterday morning. And now! (*Breaking down completely.*) Oh, God, I can't believe it.

PETERS:

(*Solemnly.*) The Lord has given; the Lord has taken away—

JOHNSON:

(*With desperate vehemence.*) And cursed be the name of—

PETERS:

(*Holding up his hand.*) No! Do not blaspheme. Remember where you are.

JOHNSON:

Ha! I am likely to forget.

PETERS:

It is natural for you to feel bitter. It is only human. But—

JOHNSON:

But it's my duty to pretend I'm thankful just the same. I suppose you'd like me to go around praising the Lord that my wife is lying dead in her coffin.

PETERS:

No, no. Please, I beg of you. It is a bitter cup for you, I know. But there is a great deal for you to be thankful for, nevertheless.

JOHNSON:

Yes. *A great deal.* (*With a nod toward the coffin.*) She was killed by a stroke of lightning. As a Christian I suppose I ought to thank God she didn't die of cancer.

PETERS:

Hush! You misunderstand me. I was referring to another blessing altogether.

JOHNSON:

Another what?

PETERS:

In a way it must make the blow harder for you. Yes; I suppose it really does make the blow harder for you. (*With great earnestness.*) But it shouldn't, Mr. Johnson. It shouldn't! That is, not if you look at it in the right spirit, you know.

JOHNSON:

I don't know what you're talking about. Look at what in the right spirit?

PETERS:

Why, the fact, of course, that you

and Mrs. Johnson—God rest her soul—lived together in such beautiful unity and happiness.

JOHNSON:

(*With an enigmatic sigh.*) Ah!

PETERS:

Now, if you had not loved each other as you did, if, let me say, you had been given to frequent quarrels and misunderstandings, I can conceive how you might reproach yourself now for what is beyond recall.

JOHNSON:

Ah, yes. That's true, that's true.

PETERS:

That is always the real tragedy of such a loss; the remembrance of unkind words spoken—words which never, never, never can be recalled.

JOHNSON:

Yes. That is the awful part. They never can be taken back, can they?

PETERS:

But, of course, in your case, as I was saying, you have nothing to reproach yourself with. That is why I repeat, there is a great deal for you to be thankful for. The death of your dear wife, I can understand, is a terrible blow—a *terrible blow*. But only think of the bitterness and remorse you have been spared! Think of that, Mr. Johnson! Think how your wife passed out of this life into the greater life beyond with a smile on her lips and her heart full of that happiness which only the love and devotion of a husband can give. Isn't that a real blessing to be thankful for?

JOHNSON:

(*Suddenly.*) No. It isn't!

PETERS:

(*Startled.*) What?

JOHNSON:

I said it isn't . . . Mr. Peters, suppose I told you my wife didn't die the way you imagine at all.

PETERS:

I don't understand what you mean.

JOHNSON:

(*Fiercely.*) Suppose I told you my wife was killed three minutes after we had a violent quarrel.

PETERS:

You don't say so!

JOHNSON:

(*Becoming more bitter and desperate with every word.*) Suppose I told you that quarrel was only one of thousands we had during the seven years of our marriage!

PETERS:

I am dumbfounded, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON:

What about the bitterness, then? What about the remorse I must feel now for words I know I never, never, never can recall?

PETERS:

(*Bewildered.*) But—but I thought you were very happy together. You always seemed so. Why, I didn't think happiness was the word!

JOHNSON:

It wasn't the word . . . (*He chokes again, but masters his emotion enough to continue.*) Mr. Peters, I feel this is a judgment on me. I've got to tell somebody. I might as well tell you now. I was cruel to my wife—*cruel*. I was harsh and thoughtless and selfish. I allowed myself to disagree with her on the most miserable pretexts you can imagine . . . You thought we seemed happy. Ah! how much does the outside world ever know about anybody's happiness. Nothing! Nothing . . . Oh, we were happy sometimes, of course. But how can I think about those times now? How can I think about anything except when I was harsh and fault-finding and cruel? (*He bursts into tears.*) How—how can I forget that yesterday morning I called her a—*a darn fool!*

PETERS:

Hum. That was unfortunate, calling her—what you did. Still—

JOHNSON:

Oh, I acted like a brute, I tell you—a brute. My God, to have one day to live over again! Just one day!

PETERS:

Every deed is its own—ahem—undertaker, as you might say. The past, Mr. Johnson, is irrevocably buried. You must not let your grief bear you to the ground like this. You must look upward and forward. You say you were impatient and hasty at times. Well, so are we all. Why, even I myself can remember having slipped occasionally. Besides, who knows? There may have been cause for your impatience. Doubtless you remember the old adage, It takes—ahem—two to make a quarrel.

JOHNSON:

(*Indignantly.*) No! Don't you dare say such things about my wife. I won't have it. It was my fault entirely, I tell you. Mine! Mine! Mine!

PETERS:

(*Apologetic.*) Why, I didn't mean to—

JOHNSON:

I don't say she was perfect, understand. I don't *say* she was perfect. But she was my wife and I loved her, and—and I guess she was about as perfect as it's healthy for any human being to be!

PETERS:

I am sorry, Mr. Johnson. I assure you I didn't mean to say anything that—

JOHNSON:

(*Magnanimously.*) Of course! You couldn't know. How could you. I don't blame you. You were only trying to save my feelings—

PETERS:

Quite so. I merely wanted to—

JOHNSON:

Yes, yes. I understand. You were trying to make it easier for me. I appreciate your intentions. Forgive me for losing my temper the way I did. (*With a short, hard laugh.*) You see how easily I do it. But I can't bear to hear anything said against Maggie. I just can't bear it. You don't know what a beautiful nature she had, Mr. Peters. You'll never know. Why, when I look back over the past seven years it seems to me she was almost like a—a saint.

PETERS:

A saint! That is indeed a wonderful memory to have of one's wife, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON:

Well, that's just what she *was* like—a saint. Why, she had a nature so patient and forgiving and unselfish and—oh! how could I have been so blind. Why couldn't I realize it sooner—before it was too late!

PETERS:

We seldom appreciate our blessings until they are gone.

JOHNSON:

Isn't that true! That was just the trouble. I didn't appreciate her at all. I was blind. Oh, I suppose I deserve what I—no! It's too cruel. It's too cruel. (*He chokes again.*)

PETERS:

(*Placing his hand on JOHNSON'S shoulder, kindly.*) Pray, Mr. Johnson. Pray.

JOHNSON:

What good will that do? It won't bring her back to life.

PETERS:

No. . . . But it will give you courage.

JOHNSON:

Courage? For what? To face the rest of my life in bitterness and self-reproach?

S.S.—6

PETERS:

No. . . . To face the rest of your life in resignation unto the will that is above.

JOHNSON:

(*Moved.*) Ah!

PETERS:

(*Deeply.*) The ways of Providence are inscrutable.

JOHNSON:

If she only could come back for a little while I think I could stand it.

PETERS:

You must trust in the wisdom that is above.

JOHNSON:

If she could only come back for just a little while—if it was only for a day, if it was even only for an hour, so I could tell her how sorry I was.

PETERS:

The ways of Providence are inscrutable, but always wise. Pray for strength to help you bear your sorrow. Believe me, your prayers will not go unanswered.

JOHNSON:

(*With sudden earnestness.*) Do you believe that?

PETERS:

I know it!

JOHNSON:

Do you really believe that prayers are always answered?

PETERS:

I am sure of it, sure of it.

JOHNSON:

I wonder, then, if—oh! you must see how much I'm suffering . . . Do something for me, will you? Oh, don't say you won't.

PETERS:

I would do anything in my power to help you. Anything!

JOHNSON:

Then pray—oh, don't say you

won't—pray for my wife to be brought back to life.

PETERS:

(*Thunderstruck.*) Pray for your wife to be—My dear Mr. Johnson, have you lost your mind?

JOHNSON:

(*With rapid intensity.*) Oh, it sounds crazy, I suppose. But you said prayers were always answered. Well, prove it. Don't say it's impossible. Try!

PETERS:

(*Dazed.*) You surely cannot realize what you are asking me.

JOHNSON:

I do, I do . . . Perhaps it won't be any use. But try anyhow. You're a minister. You can do it much better than I can.

PETERS:

(*Scratching his head.*) I—I—I—surely you cannot realize what you are saying, Mr. Johnson. Why, your wife is dead.

JOHNSON:

My God! don't you suppose I know that?

PETERS:

You are asking me to raise her from the dead.

JOHNSON:

No. I only want you to pray to have her brought back to life for a little while. That's all.

PETERS:

But—but that is the same thing.

JOHNSON:

Oh, don't argue about it. Just try, won't you? It can't do any possible harm, can it, to try?

PETERS:

But—but your wife is in Heaven.

JOHNSON:

(*With desperation.*) Won't you try, at least?

PETERS:

(*Aghast at the idea.*) It would be—sacrilege!

JOHNSON:

You see how unhappy I am. You see how I'm suffering, don't you?

PETERS:

(*Awkwardly.*) I am sincerely sorry for you, of course. Sincerely sorry for you. But you evidently misunderstand the purpose of prayer. Prayers are answered only when they are made for—ahem—spiritual blessings—not material ones.

JOHNSON:

Then you refuse?

PETERS:

I should like to help you very much, indeed. But I don't quite see how I conscientiously can. It was an act of divine will that your dear wife was taken from you. For some mysterious reason which we are not able to understand, her death was undoubtedly for the best. Now, to pray for her to be brought back to life again—don't you see?—would be blasphemous.

JOHNSON:

Blasphemous!

PETERS:

Well—sacrilegious. . . . However, since you are so evidently unhappy, I almost feel it my duty to do what I can for you. Indeed, I may say I would be tempted to accede to your request except for one thing. (*He pauses.*)

JOHNSON:

What's that?

PETERS:

It would be exceedingly painful for me, you see, to raise your hopes only to doom them to—ahem—disappointment.

JOHNSON:

You mean—

PETERS:

(*Nodding eagerly.*) Precisely, I mean that precisely.

JOHNSON:

You don't think, then, there would really be much chance of—

PETERS:

Let me be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Johnson. Let us talk together as—ahem—man to man. . . . No, I don't.

JOHNSON:

Ah, I was afraid so.

PETERS:

Of course, we cannot tell for certain, you understand. We cannot tell for certain. As you have asked me so earnestly to offer a short prayer for the—ah—resurrection of your late lamented wife, I shall do so. I want to warn you beforehand, however, of the numerous difficulties in the way. And I particularly want you to remember, Mr. Johnson, that all is for the best, dark as the skies may seem to you now or hereafter. The ways of Providence are often inscrutable. Do not lose your faith, I implore you. Do not lose your faith, no matter what happens. Remember to look always upward and forward. Remember that in some mysterious way everything is for the best. And—well, ahem—that is all. Let us pray. (*Both men bow their heads in prayer.*) O Thou alone who canst give and who alone canst take away, look down now upon this, Thy sorrowing servant, and give him peace. And if it please Thee, restore her whom thou hast so suddenly taken away. (*The woman in the coffin moves slightly and raises her head.*) Thou knowest how that these twain were united in bonds of loving matrimony. O restore now those bonds if it be possible, or else may he who is in sorrow find comfort and resignation unto his soul. Ahem! Amen!

MAGGIE:

(*Her voice cuts through the stillness like a hatchet.*) So you'll call me a darn fool, will you? So you'll call me a darn fool?

PETERS:

(*With a nervous start.*) The Lord help us!

MAGGIE:

(*Speaking with a shrill, monotonous vacancy.*) So you'll call me a darn fool, so you'll call me a darn fool.

JOHNSON:

(*Jumping up, overjoyed.*) She's come to life. Your prayer worked. (*He runs to the coffin.*) Maggie! Maggie!

MAGGIE:

(*As before.*) Aren't you just ashamed of yourself, William Johnson? Aren't you just ashamed of yourself?

JOHNSON:

(*Going closer to her, timidly.*) Maggie! I can't believe it. Are you really alive?

MAGGIE:

(*Sitting up, but paying no attention to him.*) Oh, it's a fine sort of a husband you are, anyhow, with me slaving away my life so you can sit around and smoke your pipe, and then you complaining when anything goes wrong as if I didn't have anything better to do than wear my fingers to a bone. Yes, a nice sort of a life it is and a nice sort of a husband you are and a nice sort of a way you talk to me, I must say!

JOHNSON:

(*Touching her on the shoulder, bewildered.*) Maggie, dear! Don't you see me. Don't you recognize me.

MAGGIE:

(*As before.*) What do you think the neighbors would say if they knew the way you treated your own wife—as if she was dirt under your feet. But you needn't think I'm going to stand it any longer, William Johnson, because I'm not. Do you hear? I'm not!

JOHNSON:

Maggie! Dearest!

MAGGIE:

Yes! Call me a fool, why don't you.

That's my name right enough. I was a fool to marry you. A great, big fool.

JOHNSON:

(Desperate.) Darling!

MAGGIE:

Oh, a fine sort of a husband you make, anyhow, with your meek ways, and you pretending you're too delicate for hard work. Who ever heard of a wife having to get up and cook the breakfast so's her husband can lie abed and sleep his head off of a morning? Who ever heard of a decent, self-respecting man letting his own wife help him do the housework? What do you think a wife is? A slave A sla—
(She gives a short shudder and looks around her in sudden amazement and terror.) My God! Where am I?

JOHNSON:

(Touching her hand reassuringly.) There, there, dear. It's all right. Don't be frightened.

MAGGIE:

(In a daze.) Where am I?

JOHNSON:

It's all right, it's all right.

PETERS:

(Advancing pompously toward the coffin.) Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Johnson. There is no need for you to be alarmed.

MAGGIE:

(Staring at him.) Well, what are you doing here?

PETERS:

I beg of you not to excite yourself so. It might cause a relapse.

MAGGIE:

I'm not excited. But something's happened. I know it, I feel it. Something's happened.

PETERS:

(Slowly.) You are right. Something has happened—a very wonderful, a very marvelous thing has happened.

JOHNSON:

(Dropping on his knees beside the coffin.) Oh, it's too wonderful to believe. I can't believe it! Oh! Oh!

MAGGIE:

(Suspiciously.) What's the matter with you? Are you going out of your senses?

JOHNSON:

Maggie! I can't believe it, that's all. You have come back to me. You have really come back to me!

MAGGIE:

You're crazy. I think you're both crazy.

PETERS:

We are both a trifle upset, Mrs. Johnson. That is all. You can hardly blame us, can you, under the circumstances?

MAGGIE:

Circumstances? What circumstances?

PETERS:

Why—well—you see, we hardly expected you to—ahem—return to life so suddenly.

MAGGIE:

Return to life! You talk as if I'd been dead.

PETERS:

(Solemnly.) You have been.

MAGGIE:

(Pointing to herself.) Me! Dead!

PETERS:

Quite so. Exactly.

MAGGIE:

Say! I guess the heat's gone to your brain.

PETERS:

(With wounded dignity.) If you don't choose to believe me, Mrs. Johnson, you can easily see for yourself.

MAGGIE:

(Perceiving she is in a coffin and becoming frenzied.) My God! You've got me in a coffin. (She turns furiously on her husband.) So that's the kind

of a husband you are? William Johnson, you'd bury your own wife alive. Yow!

PETERS:

(*Trying to pacify her.*) Hush. You mustn't scream like that. A very wonderful thing has happened to you.

MAGGIE:

(*Screaming in terrified rage.*) So that's the kind of a husband you are. I might have known it. You'd try to bury me alive. Yow! Yow!

PETERS:

Peace! Peace, be still! You do not appreciate your blessings. You have just been brought back to life through a miracle.

MAGGIE:

(*Springing out of the coffin at one bound and revealing herself as a woman not only of considerable lung power but of excellent biceps.*) A miracle, is it? A miracle! It'll be a miracle if somebody around here doesn't go to jail for this. That'll be the only kind of a miracle I know anything about. (*She turns again on Johnson.*) So it isn't enough for you to wear me into my grave before my time; you'd like to bury me before I'm even dead.

JOHNSON:

You don't understand. Listen! (*He tries to embrace her.*)

MAGGIE:

(*Pushing him off.*) Look out, there. Keep your hands off me. How do I know you don't want to strangle me to death?

JOHNSON:

Oh, but you don't understand.

MAGGIE:

Oh, don't I, though. Don't I!

JOHNSON:

No, you don't; or you couldn't say such things. (*He tries to take her in his arms again.*) Maggie! Dear! Just think how wonderful it is that you have really come back to life so I can

hold you in my arms again. Just think!

MAGGIE:

(*Laconically.*) I'm thinking. I'm thinking you can't fool me with soft stuff like that. Want to hold me in your arms. Likely!

JOHNSON:

But it's true. I do. I never understood you until today. I never realized before what a beautiful nature you had.

MAGGIE:

Beautiful nature! Say, do you suppose I'm going to swallow mush like that?

JOHNSON:

(*Getting absolutely desperate.*) But I mean it, Maggie. I never knew how wonderful you were until you were hit by that stroke of lightning yesterday. Then it all came over me in a flash. It seemed as if—Oh, Maggie dear, you don't know how I suffered. It was awful. That was why I asked Mr. Peters if he would try to bring you back to life. I wanted to tell you how sorry I was. Why, don't you see how wonderfully everything's turned out? It's just like a dream—a beautiful dream. We're never going to quarrel any more. We're always going to be happy together. We're going to start out all over again. Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it wonderful?

MAGGIE:

(*Eyeing him coldly.*) Wonderful! You must be crazy, William Johnson, to be saying such things to me. Who ever heard of a man telling his own wife she has a beautiful nature? Why, it's not sensible. And what do you mean about me being hit by lightning. I was never hit by lightning. If I was ever hit by anything it must have been you.

JOHNSON:

Don't you remember about yesterday, dear?

MAGGIE:

Yesterday?

JOHNSON:

I mean, don't you remember about the thunder storm? We were standing under a tree in the back yard. There was a big black cloud over the house. Don't you remember? Then suddenly there was a terrible flash—don't you remember?

MAGGIE:

Say! was that the time you called me a darn fool?

JOHNSON:

I'm sorry about that, dear. I didn't really mean it.

MAGGIE:

Was that the time you told me I could go to the devil?

JOHNSON:

I'm awfully sorry, Maggie—

MAGGIE:

(Insistently.) Was it?

JOHNSON:

(Reluctantly.) Yes—

MAGGIE:

Well, let me think . . . Yes; I remember now. Everything went into a kind of daze. I guess that lightning must have knocked me sort of silly for a while, all right. (*With renewed indignation.*) But what right did that give you to stick me in a coffin, I'd like to know? What right did that give you to try to bury me alive?

JOHNSON:

But don't you see, dear; you were dead.

MAGGIE:

Dead? Dead your grandmother! Do I look dead? Do I act dead? (*She advances toward him with fire in her eye.*) Well, do I?

JOHNSON:

(*Edging away nervously.*) Not now, dear. But that's because you've been brought to life.

MAGGIE:

I should say I *had* been brought to life. And you'll find out pretty soon, William Johnson, how alive I am, I can tell you. When I—

PETERS:

(*Interposing himself.*) One moment, please, Mrs. Johnson, I appreciate how difficult it must be for you to adjust yourself immediately to your old surroundings. It is quite natural for you to feel somewhat upset. But I must beg you to show a little respect in your speech for those—ahem—celestial surroundings which you have so recently quitted. Remember, Mrs. Johnson, where you have been.

MAGGIE:

Where I've been! Where have I been I'd like to have you tell me except in a stuffy old coffin that wouldn't bring in five dollars at an auction sale. I don't call that a very celestial place, and I guess you wouldn't either if you'd ever tried it.

PETERS:

Your body has been in a coffin. (*Impressively.*) Your soul has been in heaven.

MAGGIE:

In heaven?

PETERS:

Certainly. Where else, indeed? (*With a superb evangelical sweep of the arm.*) Oh! Mrs. Johnson, what a marvelous experience has been yours. No wonder you felt, as you put it, in a kind of daze. Who would not be dazed by those unspeakable glories that you have seen? No doubt you would even now fly back to them. Your spirit, I know, is craving to soar, soar up, up, up into the sky. But you must be patient with us here on earth. For some mysterious reason which we cannot fathom you have been miraculously returned to life. Undoubtedly it means that your mission in this world has not yet been fulfilled. It means that your labors are not yet over. There is still work for you to do—

MAGGIE:

(*Flaring up.*) Work! Work! Work! That's all I ever hear in this house; work. What do you think a man's wife is; a slave? Up in the morning and cook breakfast while *he* (*indicating Johnson*) wants to lie abed and snore his head off like a pig. (*Accusingly.*) Yes you do, and don't you dare deny it. Not that I ever let you! I should say *not*. Suppose you do help me with the housework. What's that? What's beating a few rugs, and sawing a few sticks of wood, and washing the clothes and doing a few things around the house amount to? It's my brain that directs you, isn't it. Without me around to tell you what to do next where'd you be, anyhow? Nowhere at all. I've still got work to do in this world, have I? All right; we'll begin right now. I'll show you what's what. Come on, there; pick up that coffin and take it out into the wood-shed, and chop it up fine for firewood. Then when you've done that properly come back here again and I'll tell you what else to do. Work! I'll show you!

JOHNSON:

(*Picking up one end of the coffin doubtfully.*) It's pretty heavy.

MAGGIE:

(*Folding her arms.*) Mr. Peters, will you help him?

PETERS:

(*Coming forward.*) Why, certainly, Mrs. Johnson. Certainly.

MAGGIE:

He's the weakest thing this side of a rag I ever laid eyes on.

PETERS:

(*Seizing his end.*) The Lord giveth strength for every burden.

MAGGIE:

(*Stopping them as they commence carrying the coffin away.*) Here; wait a minute. Perhaps you'd better pull up the shades first. (*With a grim trace of humor.*) You know I'm not a corpse any more. (*They put down the coffin. Johnson pulls up the shades. Sunlight streams into the room.*) There; that's high enough. (*They pick up their burden again.*) Don't forget to come right back again just as soon as you've finished in the wood-shed. I've got some other things for you to do around the house. Quite a few of them! (*They start marching for the door in solemn time.*)

JOHNSON:

(*To Peters, in a peculiar tone of voice.*) What was that you said, Mr. Peters, about trusting in the mercy that is above?

PETERS:

(*As they disappear around the corner.*) I said, Mr. Johnson, the ways of Providence are inscrutable. (*Mrs. Johnson sits down in a rocking chair by the window and commences humming.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.



THE older a woman grows the more she knows about men. The older a man grows the less he knows about women.



WHEN a man ceases to lie to his wife, his love for her has grown cold.



THE PARTING

By Laura Kent Mason

HE was going away, into danger. It was his last evening in town. She waited for him to come to tell her good-bye. They had had a love affair as light as an Autumn leaf and as important, but the parting would color it into romance.

She had on her most becoming frock—one that he liked. She turned off the electric lights, lit rose-shaded candles—and waited.

Their last evening together!

He would hold her in his arms. She would tell him that it was best—this way. Things couldn't have gone on—as they were. The parting had to come—he was doubly dear because he had to go. She said over to herself dozens of little, endearing sentences that fitted

in. She liked the sound of them. Saying them to him would make the affair significant, memorable.

An hour passed. A messenger boy came, with a note, scrawled rather incoherently:

"I didn't seem to be able to get you on the 'phone. This must be a hasty note, for I'm awfully busy. I leave at eleven but will call to say good-bye before I leave."

She waited. The candles burned low.

At half-past eleven her husband came home.

"Just passed your friend, the Fredericks boy," he remarked. "He was with some friends and they were taking him to the station. He was as boiled as an owl."



I NEVER KNEW WHAT KISSES WERE

By Amelia Paul

I NEVER knew what kisses were—
My home lay in a vale
Where calmly shone the sun of spring
And stars and moon were pale.

Now burn the moon and stars above,
For I have travelled far—
A scorching summer sun beats down:
I know what kisses are!



CLARICE GOES TO SEED

By Jeremy Lane

I

THINGS were running well. All the little lines pulled smoothly, and there was velvet on two sides. Good food and drink down in the main dining room, cocktails and liqueurs in the Ladies' Grill, and the night-clerk had sent up a fresh five hundred Shepherds' Clubs in the way of cigarettes—so Clarice was well nested. The taxi credit man hadn't called for a week, and she would be able nicely to satisfy him. The suite was paid for—far into the future—three weeks or so. The chamois-colored maid had just departed, properly tipped, after renewing her interest in Clarice's pink-tapering fingers, and the ensemble of corn-colored hair, delicate cheeks, eyes like summer fiction, and exquisitely turned chin. Clarice had a perfect throat, a perfect body, and tripled this perfection in the taste with which she clothed or did not clothe the same. Also consonant with this twin-six state of life were unlimited passes for a chain of exclusive summer parks, extensive credit arrangements about town, a case of Cliquot 1906 from Stubby, now in the cellars of the hotel awaiting her wish, and several hundred in freshly ironed Federal Reserve currency.

It was eleven before noon, and, as she waited for breakfast to be brought up, Clarice lounged upon the Persian dais, and thought over everything, chiefly how long it had taken to round up all this and get it working.

She recalled the automobile lottery game, and smiled faintly to remember how eager are the rich to get much for little. They bit hard. It had been a

good clean-up. Stubby Taggart had a head on him, even if he insisted on topping it with a brown derby to match his tie. Then, there had been the race-track subscription fund, to build and operate a trotting park in Illinois under the auspices of the Belgian Warphanage and in the interests of that kindly but fictitious organization of war relief. This got around the anti-racing laws of the state, and Clarice recalled how thirty-one of the most prosperous crooks of the East and the West sent in their checks to back this future goldmine, that they might get in with their own snakes. She had not forgotten Stubby's precaution in having every check certified first, nor her own share in the soliciting. The crooks bit hard, too—were still biting. A similar case was the Edgeleaf County Sunday School Song Book Campaign, now ancient history, having netted a plenty.

Clarice had spent long dusty hours in the Public Library, memorizing enough of Hebrew language and tradition to be able to solicit Yiddishers in the matter of a family crest that would reach back to Abraham and Isaac without a blemish. For each millionaire collector of stove-lids there had been a coat of arms, of Talmudic nature, that rivalled the very shields of England, and the Hebrew lettering was far more decorative and impressive than mere Latin. How proudly the far-scattered sons of Moses penned their checks for such distinction, strictly guaranteed! If the fair solicitor's hair had only been dark, she would have doubled the haul.

At present, a small army of talkers, remittance men, shrewd gamesters all, were operating from San Diego to Que-

bec, and from Puget Sound to Pensacola, taking their commissions and their inspiration from Clarice Munday and her lieutenant, Stub Taggart. It was the capable Stubby who raced after these near-crooks, and kept them supplied with the ripest fruit of Miss Munday's imagination. She herself had retired from the field.

Breakfast was without flavor. The coffee tasted burned, if that were possible, and the toast had sweated. The black who brought the tray, and who was asked to remove it at once, was metropolitan, well broken to morning women; but something in the lace and satin sweetness here puzzled him, was fascinating, new in his life. His eyes magnetized back to her as she left the dais and went to the deep-set window. She had spoken briefly, though in all gentleness, yet he was afraid of Clarice. From his unlettered point of view he got something which wiser men always missed, and instinctively he felt for his pocket of silver.

Like many an honest person, Miss Munday was bored with success.

The Shepheard's Clubs were smoking like Teamsters' Delight, and she tossed several into the grate. Glancing down the list of possibilities for today, amusements, shops, invitations, canteens, she was no better pleased. Her cheeks were quite pallid underneath, and there was no light in her blue eyes. She lapsed upon the dais again. A certain health, which would not be driven from her body, was now causing great discomfort. Every nerve beneath her silken skin cried for purity there, since all the interior sources were blinded with poison.

In the sleep-echo that came over her, she did not relax and rest. Her mind went on searching for new material, independent of her will, and she was dreamily disgusted with its results. One gemmed slipper fell to the rug, her foot grew chill, but she did not summon the energy to bend over and retrieve it. Except for perfect health, she was very ill.

Into this fragrant inordination came

a telegram from Taggart, and, without rising from the Persian couch, Clarice wired back to him the money he needed. Forty minutes later, he wired again, merely returning twice the amount he had taken; and his second telegram bored Clarice more than the first.

Now she lifted her heavy eyelids, and stared at the cushion under her arm. A slow silvery light was gathering in the blue. She closed her eyes again, tightly, then re-opened them, and the light was gaining. It was an idea.

She arose and slid the gown from her shoulders. She ordered luncheon, immediately, and her voice was like a summer evening at nine. When the food came, she was dressed for the street. A cab waited for the moment of her emergence from the lobby. A travel bag was set beside the chauffeur. As the cab rolled down to the station, Clarice studied a time-table with full concentration. Two hours later, a very trim, modish, mauve, veiled young woman descended from the afternoon train at Springwood.

II

THERE was a horse-propelled vehicle upon which was lettered "Maple Crest." This title offended Clarice, yet she allowed the driver with nickel-plated suspenders to take her arm and assist her in at the back of the carry-all. Her bag was slid in close to her silken ankles, and the homespun driver turned away quickly, and wished he hadn't.

The drive was dusty. Clarice was the only new arrival for Maple Crest. The double row of maple trees on either side of the lane was as decent as mere maples can be, and the smell of golden-rod and rag-weed was like taking something from the doctor. But a grim cast held the girl's mouth, and the keenly focused light in her eyes remained, even through the veil.

The room they gave her had a window, a wash-stand with crockery and fringed towels, a bed very white and fat, a clothes-closet with hooks instead of a bath room, a cane chair, one mir-

ror, and a rope coiled below the window-sill in the event of fire. Two dollars a day in advance, meals included if you were there to get 'em. It was all preposterous. But the blue eyes were steeled. The whiskered gentleman who took her out of the hands of the driver believed that her laugh was a sign of pleasure. He had his own ideas about the way some women dressed. He carried her fifty-dollar bill to the neighbors, and there was some talk of framing it—such a shame ever to put a crinkle in it.

"Springwood—" breathed Clarice.

III

HAVING missed supper at six o'clock, out of a new kind of timidity that amazed herself, Clarice forced herself to bed at nine, long after the lights were out elsewhere. A million gnats danced about the chimney of her kerosene lamp. Out on the lake, one lantern specked in a boat, but she did not know or care to know that they were fishing bull-heads for her breakfast. She was bitterly aware that all her Shepheard's Clubs were ninety miles away—nothing in the world mattered but that, and she couldn't have one. In a weak moment, she considered padding the showcase in the dining room downstairs, and nicking out a package of Home Runs, but the steel of her will sprung in place again, and she discarded the thought as not fitting in with her big idea. So, in the yellow darkness of the lamp, she studied the jumping of her nerves, and the hours wore on.

At length, when courage had accumulated, she arose, blew out the lamp, and tried to sleep, but the bed was hot. Nothing like sleep came near. At day-break she was softly pacing the room, meeting a real crisis. She believed she was at the point of death for a cigarette.

Also a thirst began, deep in her white throat, until by sunrise, when the bull-head catchers rowed their punt into the reeds along shore and came into the house, the girl's entire body felt charred

with the dry heat that only a morning brandy could quench. Her senses cried out to send a wire to Stubby, who did not know where she was or what she was doing. He could bring relief. But the generalship that had never lost a battle was holding now against this mutiny, and the mirror registered only a frightened smile. Clarice remained steadfast.

The landlady, wife of Whiskers, came a-trembling to rap at the door and ask if she intended to come down to breakfast. In desperation, Clarice said Yes, and after a half-rub with a cold raw towel, descended the stairs to the dining room. She was introduced around, and not a man, hired or boarder, but felt the table spinning before him as she was assigned a chair and a plate.

She scalded her lips with the coffee, which went down like rusty wire. The platter of fried eggs, rather gaudy though defeated, nearly turned her against the notion of eating, yet there was something interesting about the smell of the bacon. In fact, the bacon was properly cured, salted, fried and drained. How did they happen to know such an art in this godless province? Also, the chipped and ugly pitcher contained an odd miracle of cream, rich, yellow, sweet, at least five-x.

Clarice could not forgive the driver of the bus his appetite for corn cakes, which he built into a magnificent stack before storming them on two sides with ambidexterous tools. They disappeared at a stroke, and the driver's stalwart arms worked like piston rods, eclipsing the bright buckles of his suspenders.

The new boarder, having been induced out of respect to her hostelry to taste one of the greasy fried eggs, had another surprise in the sweetness of the egg itself and the skill of its preparation. The seasoning was admirable. Clarice finished breakfast with the startled knowledge that she had for a while forgotten she had no cigarettes. They showed her the lake and a boat, but she confessed she knew not how to work the oars. This boat was included in the two dollars. Bathing suits were

to rent for ten cents a day, if one agreed to wash them out when through. The bargain was repellant, but determination smiled in the blue eyes. At ten o'clock that morning she went for a swim.

Cold water crept up and up, freezing her limbs under the crude wool bloomers. She believed there had never been anything so hideous as herself now. She bent forward and dabbled frightened finger-tips in the dancing surface of the lake, which rose higher by little pokes, until every nerve was possessed by the water. With a stifled gasp, Clarice plunged, head foremost, and the worst was over.

IV

WHEN the savage liquid was done trickling down her neck and palpitant bosom, and the blonde hair was taken from across her eyes, she grew aware that someone was laughing.

It was a youthful, good-natured, but utterly rude laugh, centaurian. Clarice turned. A strong young man was lying full length upon the board-pier, his eyes as mirthful as the sun-tipped ripples everywhere. For the first time since she was twelve, Clarice Munday's cheeks grew pink without aid.

"Brave work," said the observant young man.

"You're wonderfully helpful," said Clarice, finding her natural breath again.

"Oh, come now—free country—" he remonstrated, and then laughed again as if he enjoyed it.

She faced him very straightly and thought of the meanest thing she could say. "I'll bet you wear suspenders—"

"I'll bet you came for the rest cure—and can't rest," countered the handsome rudeness.

Clarice swore softly at his penetration, and nearly forgot she was standing in four feet of lake water. He was saying:

"Wonderful—" rather softly to himself, and there was nothing of the

provinces in his tone, or in his eyes. He was a promising young man—one to whom personal liberties are but courtesy.

Clarice realized that her difficulty was his clothes—the need of them at present. If she had seen him dressed for street instead of swim, she could have placed him without hesitation. Now, with himself just more or less as he was, rather good in a swimming suit of yellow wool and stripes, she was at sea, and could not get her range. Talking made it worse, for he was no farmer. She glanced down nervously at herself. Only the fullest and surest beauty of woman could survive the suit she had rented, especially when soaked. It bound her arms and lay in a heavy gaping wrinkle across one shoulder. The young man on the pier was rousing himself. After placing his cigarette on the edge of the boards, he dropped into the water.

"Permit me," he said, wading for her.

"They said this was a sandy shore," remarked Clarice, "but it feels like the clay baths at Eastoria."

"So it does. When were you there last?"

She stared at him, and could not be sure that his smile was disrespectful. His hair was neat, as if no amount of swimming could spoil it—something very quiet and easy about him. He was twenty-four.

"Does it matter when I was there last?" asked Clarice, less than sorry he had left the pier.

"Beg pardon. All my fault," said he. Some people are touchy about that. They need the mud for such a variety of causes—yes?"

"You're unpardonable," said Clarice. "This water is turning me to stone."

"Shall we indulge," he asked, smiling in a deprecativeway, "in the old summer-girl stuff of teaching loveliness how to swim?"

Clarice now looked closer. "You're older than I thought. Go ahead. Let's get it over."

He ducked her again, and she was

furious, but their conversation went on without the present tense.

"Why didn't you go to the Eastoria baths this time?" he inquired pleasantly.

"I wanted to get down among the seeds," she replied, and he did not take it to heart.

"Ah, you found quite a pod-ful—yes?"

After her silence, he began anew: "Did you bring your knitting?"

"No, this is a vacation, the first in a long while—"

"At last you're telling the truth—part of it. You couldn't do that at Eastoria."

Following a prolonged flounder below the surface, Clarice used the first breath that came: "Why Eastoria? You seem all wrapped up in the place—"

"Yes, I went down there in the interests of the warphans—Belgian Warphanage, you know. They're building a racing park, and I was selling stock to some of the guests—the mud-bathers—they can afford that sort of thing—yes?"

Clarice trembled violently. "I'm going in," she said.

V

His name was Alward. Clarice needed the remainder of that day to make sure that he did not know her, and that he did not imagine his swimming pupil to be the originator of the Belgian Warphanage graft. Stubby had probably sent Alward to Eastoria, to handle the wealth that came there to be oozed through the curative mud.

Throughout that afternoon, Clarice moved about Maple Crest, avoiding Alward, avoiding herself. A deep slow-going seaworthy thirst was racking her, and her lips pinched thin at the thought of a smoke. Whenever Alward came up to her, the aroma of his cigarette made her most unhappy. She became haunted by the idea of getting away from the place, back to the city. The

portals of the Straight and Narrow seemed to grow more terrifying.

When the bus was ready to meet the late afternoon train in the village of Springwood, Clarice very nearly placed herself in the keeping of him who did the corn-cake disappearing act. But the bus rolled away down maple lane without her.

She disliked Alward, also, for being such a prude that he could not ask her to accept a cigarette. He did not dream that she would. His talk was cheerful, his presence rather all right, for he had a way with him. All of Stub Taggart's choices had a way with them—nicely groomed, winning.

It began to bother Clarice, to think of this child as he must have been at Eastoria, selling faked interests to those who would attempt to fake up further interests for themselves, at public expense. She did not enjoy the thought. Alward was an ideal gamester—not that. But she began to draw a distinction between herself and him. It was different for her. She had been at it so long—of course there had been moments of innocence in girlhood, but she was now nearly twenty-seven. And Alward—at heart such a decent lad. Clarice felt everything going better and worse than before.

Grimly she held to her purpose, ate the food that appeared on the common table, and whenever it was time for guests to walk, bathe, play tennis, congregate or sleep, was obedient to the customs of Maple Crest. Alward presented her with a true bathing suit, something of bright silk that would never impede motion. It was more like living to wear it, even though the water itself was but tardy in its friendliness.

The second day she was ill in her room, without interruption. Alward paced the grounds and endeavored to fish. The third she came forth, and the ache that came from abstinence was somewhat dulled, more bearable. Her cheeks were taut. On the fourth, she received lessons again in the water, and during that afternoon forced herself to

attempt tennis with him. He laughed at her, but did it so joyously that no one could hate him for it. She had not held a racquet for ten years. Her muscles quirked and murmured. Not all at once did her grace show through. Alward was the first to cry out, quite soberly, when she finally found the flying ball, that she was lovely, lovely.

There was a form of satisfaction in thinking of poor Stubby, who must be a frantic man, not knowing what had become of her. His urgent wires would go unheeded. He would come in from the field. He would rave, and his brown derby grow hot.

On the sixth day, Clarice actually partook of the three meals included in the two dollars per, and did so because she was hungry. She had a standing joke with the bus driver, and he had lost some of his fear of her ankles. He could look in her face now, across the table, without a blush and without losing a bite. Whiskers had at last been able to change her fifty. Clarice could not swim a stroke, but the water no longer made her angry. In fact, she did not wait for it to crawl up over her, but shoved ahead and splashed, and, on the day which marked her first week at Maple Crest, she threw up her arms to the shining heavens, and laughed with pleasure.

This was a winning game at last. She paid for another week and was pleased with herself. It was surprising that these seeds could be so friendly. On professional principles, it hurt the girl to think she had misjudged them all her life. She had reason to doubt the finality of her own mind. The Missus was showing her how to knit, and this was a relief when the tennis muscles cried for it. Color was appearing on her cheeks where it had never been before, not so daring in effect perhaps, nor so fascinating to others, but much more interesting to Clarice herself. On the eighth day, she lost a proud battle against sun-tan, and yielded to its healthy tyranny.

The ninth morning she waked early and went out upon the lawn at five

o'clock—almost as early as Whiskers and the Missus. Birds do something different up to that hour of the day. Clarice realized it for the first time. She breathed deeply of the unfiltered air, and her lungs caught a delirious satisfaction from it. Her body gained new heights, every emotion keeping pace. She could ask nothing further from the world.

Praying never to lose the joy of it all, having forgotten the cost endured, she ran to her room and donned the bright bathing suit. It was nearly a duplicate of the yellow one worn by the giver of the gift—quite possible to swim in it without sinking, as one must, and should, have done in the rented bloomers. Clarice proceeded quite fleetly down to the water-side. No one else was in. She had wished for the opportunity—this semi-privacy. Accepting it, with a laugh in her throat, she ran out the pier, leapt upon the end of the diving board, and flung through the air as swimmers do head foremost into the water. That glorious moment might live forever. The past, sleek, golden, lifeless, was all baptized away. The water hissed musically about her ears, softly roaring until she came up. Coolly remembering instructions, she began to put them into practice. Unfold the body—at the moment you straighten the legs—just so.

The directions were doubtless perfect, but needed much of industry. Clarice could not swim. She was going down. But Alward was there. From nowhere, he came up beside her, in his tennis clothes, his hair neatly combed. He did not scold, but there was a look of horror in his eyes. She gulped, and felt his hand under her arm. He did not tow her all the way to shore. There was no excitement. He let her down when her toes could touch bottom, and led her shoreward. In about four feet of water, he stood close facing her, and said:

"Clarice, my darling—yes?"

It was all in that. Clarice was plunged into a consternation she could not fathom. She wished he had let her

go down. Alward was in love with her—everything spoiled!

Next day she thanked him again, and explained that she was called back to the city. She was so cynical that he could not miss it, but he felt the necessity of speaking his heart outright, leaving the future up to her. She told him there was no future, that she had come to find one, etc. He laughed again, but the sound was nerveless. He was down, and said so. But Clarice rode in the bus, and bade good-bye to her corn-cake artist with the bright suspenders.

VI

IN the suite, with the city noises grinding far below, Stub Taggart sat near the Persian dais and listened to the most astonishing story of his life. Clarice was speaking, and he knew better than to interrupt, even when her words came most leisurely.

"Now, Stub, you're going to Maple Crest this afternoon and get hold of this Alward. When you're with him, you don't know me—never heard of

me. You're going to call him off. He's not like us. You used to be like him. Someday he will be like you, unless you steer him off right now. If it takes me fifty years, I'm going to get into his class. After you straighten him out, find him a white man's job somewhere. Then come back here, and you'll find my new address with the clerk. If you want to come along, and lay down on the graft for the rest of your days, all right—welcome home. I'm going to find another place like Maple Crest, only without any Alwards. I've got a new toaster, and it wants little farm sausages, hand-made, and real bread and butter, all for two dollars a day, and green tea is plenty kick. Now I'm getting anxious for another chance in my nice bathing suit. I've got to get a train. Just tell the others that I've gone to seed. I'm out of it, by God! I've found another game."

Stubby stared hard.

"Well—yes or no—?"

"Say, Clarice, when you picked a game and said it was a winner, did I ever balk?"



CAST THY BREAD UPON THE WATERS

By John F. Lord

SHE always greeted him pleasantly when she entered the elevator. Sometimes she spoke words of encouragement, and once she pinned a rose on his coat-lapel. He was but a simple elevator lad and yet he was not immune to kindness. He resolved to be pleasant in return.

He greeted her warmly the next morning.

"Hullo kid," he said.

She had him discharged.



EVERY woman has an inexhaustible supply of kisses. The supply of thieves is not equal to the demand.



A WOMAN with fifteen admirers must be accomplished; a man, foolish.

YOUR LETTER

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

On Getting It

I HAVE just read your letter to me.
I can see your fingers as you draw the letters.
You do not write them, as do ordinary people who write.
You draw out each letter.
Each letter is you.
As I see them I feel that you are still drawing them.
You are near to me.
The past and the present are merged.
I can almost touch your hand as it guides the pen.
Your letters are more personal than your presence.
As I read them I pull aside the curtains.
I am myself with you.

II

On Answering It

The paper lies blank before me.
I cannot write.
Everything I would say is incomplete, impossible.
How do I know the mood of you when you open the envelope?
I am so self-conscious that I am marking up the grey paper
With little drawings of your profile.
I do not want to write to you.
My thoughts will not say themselves.
I cannot force myself to write nothings.
I do not dare to write what I want to.
I can only be colorless like the paper.
You are never so far away as when I write to you.



A FEW words mumbled by a minister constitute a marriage. A few words mumbled by a sleeping husband constitute a divorce.



K ISSING a wife is like dining in your own restaurant.

THE GUMP

By Florence Ryerson

I

STANLEY GRANT could not have told when he began to notice the girl. She first stole into his consciousness in the form of a vague irritation, an intense desire to pass hurriedly through the crowded ante-room into his inner office, or, avoiding it altogether, to enter his sanctum by a rear door. He had never regarded her closely to his knowledge, and yet, at odd moments, when he was smoothing a ruffled star, or attending rehearsal, little lantern slides of her face would slip into his mind.

At first it was purely subconscious, a matter of the inner eye, but later it became almost an obsession. The picture of her sitting there in her chair by the door, her awkward feet sprawled out, her lumpy shoulders leaning wearily against the uncomfortable wooden surface, would rise before his eyes, and frowning slightly, he would go back to the matter in hand with a distinct effort. It seemed to him that she had been there forever, that she would go on to eternity still humping over in that awkward, slovenly way.

He rang the bell by his desk.

Horton, his secretary, came from the outer office and stood regarding him.

Grant spoke crisply.

"Who's that girl out there? The one that's been holding down a chair for weeks."

"You mean the Gump?" said Horton. "They call her that out there," he added in explanation.

"Who is she?" repeated Grant.

"Her name's Ethelyn Allen," said

Horton. "She's got it all printed out on a piece of cardboard."

His levity jarred on Grant.

"What does she want?" he asked.

"What they all want. To go on the stage under your management."

Grant threw up his hands.

"Great Scott! Why don't you explain to her that there isn't any hope?"

Horton shook his head.

"I have," he said, "I've told her in every language but Chinese. Jackson's tried it too, and Griswold. Even the girls have taken a hand, but she doesn't seem to care. Just stares at the door and says she's waiting to see you—that you'll understand."

He looked down and flushed, almost embarrassed. "I can't throw her out, Mr. Grant. She looks as though the only other place she's got to sit is a park bench. It's too much like kicking a sick dog."

Grant nodded.

"All right," he said. "Let her alone. She'll get tired of waiting after awhile. Have you 'phoned Doris Grey about the change in the 'Widow's Mite'?"

Five minutes later he was deep in a pile of new plays.

But the girl still kept appearing in the outer office and she grew more and more into Grant's thoughts. He found himself wondering when he was in the intricacies of rehearsal whether she was still sitting against the wall waiting. Whether the chair where she sat was as uncomfortable as it looked. Hang it all—he must get some new chairs for the office, with padded seats. He caught himself up sternly and went on with the business in hand.

Three days later he entered his outer

office just to make sure she was still there. She sat as he had last seen her, except that the weary slump of her shoulders was even more pronounced and her clothes more shabby and worn. There were others in the room, but she seemed oblivious to her surroundings and stared blankly and without the flicker of an eyelash at the inner door marked "Private."

Stanley Grant's entrance was the signal for a general onrush and he was obliged to throw off twenty pairs of manicured and highly scented hands stretched forth to detain him, but the girl by the door did not move. She merely looked at him and in her eyes he saw a look which unaccountably made him want to put his head down and howl as he had howled at the age of four when his puppy had been run over by a wagon in the street. The phrase of Horton's about kicking a sick dog returned to his mind as he gained the rear door and passed through the busy offices to his inner room. Ten minutes later he rang his bell.

"Send that girl in," he told Horton. "The one with the sea-sick hair."

"You mean the Gump?" asked Horton in genuine surprise.

Grant nodded.

"I want to get rid of her," he said. "She—there's no use her wasting her time here."

Horton stood at the door, half hesitating.

"You won't be too hard on her, will you, Mr. Grant?" he said. "She's got us all going out there."

"I won't be harsh," he promised. "But I'll be darned firm."

II

A MINUTE later, he glanced up.

Horton was at the door and behind him stood the girl. She was wriggling her shoulders nervously and twisting a soiled white glove in her hands. He motioned her to a chair and nodded Horton out of the room. Then he turned and surveyed her more at his ease. He was surprised to find that she

was even worse than he remembered her.

Her face seemed to have been thrown together by a careless workman from the scraps and left-over things in a slovenly shop. It was not even a comedy face. The mouth was too small—a rosebud mouth, overhung by a large and pendulous nose. The chin retreated weakly into a thin and stringy neck. And over her high forehead hung wisps of horrible, dead-looking hair, the unmistakable green-yellow result of peroxidized years. Under the tangled, rattled bang of hair tortured, deep sunken eyes of glassy blue looked out at him. Her mouth was working now, as she looked about the room. And suddenly her head went down on one lean arm, her thin shoulders shaking.

Unaccountably Grant's hand went out.

"What is it?" he said gently. "Is there anything I can do?"

She looked up dully and he saw that the only crowning ghastliness possible to such a face was the result of tears.

"You can give me a part," she said.

He drew back.

"I—I am afraid there is no part fitted to you in any of our productions," the formula coming easily to his lips after long years of usage.

"I know. There's no part anywhere fitted to me, I guess. Not the way I am now." Her voice had the awful deadness of complete despair, "But I wanted to hear you say it before I gave up. You see, the last time I was here—"

"The last time?" he puzzled. "I—I don't believe I remember you."

The girl stood up suddenly. She was dressed in a dreadful thing of greenish mustard cloth that heightened the dead effect of her hair. It was hung with buttons and braid and here and there a bit of tarnished metal embroidery still held its own. From a limp and pendulous pocket she drew a flat bit of cardboard and held it out to him.

"I looked like that, then," she said. "You had the picture taken yourself."

I was playing in *A Woman's Idea*—the kid part."

Grant took the picture and stared at it. He remembered it all now, would have remembered even if the picture with its baby face and fluff of curls had not brought it back vividly to his mind. The mother had brought her here in this very starched white dress with the slimpsy blue-ribbons.

"I remember," he said. "And your mother—"

"Dead," she told him dully. "Thank God."

"What happened?" he inquired, quite simply. "I thought you had a future then."

She looked at him over the desk and a hatred of the universe flamed in her face.

"What happened?" she said. "Why, I grew up."

"You couldn't stay a child forever," he told her.

"No," she said, "but did I have to grow up into *this*?"

She swung about, her lumpy shoulders showing through the shoddy cloth of her suit.

"Look at me!" she cried.

She snatched the picture from him and regarded it hungrily.

"I was a little beauty. You said so yourself. You thought I was so young I wouldn't understand. But I wasn't five like Mom told you. I was eight, and at eight I knew enough for twelve. But she stunted me with whiskey and the late hours kept me small. It wasn't until later I began to grow."

Suddenly Grant touched the bell at his elbow and, to Horton who opened the door, he gave an order.

"I shall be busy for a time," he said. "I don't wish to be disturbed."

And then, as the door closed behind his secretary he turned again. The impulse was inexplicable, but it was unmistakably the same that had made him pick up a crushed puppy thirty years ago and hug it to his breast.

"Tell me about it," he said.

She returned to the chair, her awkward limbs sprawling as she sank down.

"There ain't much to tell," she answered. "I left you for Burton. He gave Mom a bigger price."

"I remember," he nodded. "You played in *The Little Heiress*. I was watching because I thought to use you the next year, but when I dropped in to see, you were too large for the part."

She agreed bitterly.

"It was then I began to grow. At first it was just a little, then I shot up like a weed—one of the stringy kind. Mom hid it for a time with frills, but after awhile—" She shrugged her shoulders despairingly. "Then we went home and rested."

"Home?" said Grant questioningly.

"A little jay town upstate," she answered. "Mom came from there and she used to tote me out to sing and dance at every church sociable. That's how she came to put me on the stage. After that she bragged o' course, and sent clippings home when I made a good part. We went back there to rest and she done a lot more bragging. Told 'em how you said I had a big future before me, an' all that. I wasn't well just then, she told 'em, and you'd ordered two years rest for me before I went back under your management again. She died lyin' like that."

She stopped and pushed a strand of frowzled hair from her eyes. Grant looked at her with quick sympathy and she caught the look.

"Oh, you needn't be sorry," she told him. "What happened afterwards would have killed her anyway. Even before she died I was pretty big and sort of lumpy. But she didn't see it, I guess. Just told the town I was going to be powerfully built, like Dusé. I don't believe she'd ever seen the Dusé person act, but she'd read somewhere all about how she was the world's greatest actress and how she'd left the stage right at the height of her art. And she made up about her bein' big and raw-boned until she really thought it herself. An' the town swallowed it."

She laughed harshly.

"I used to act in all the town entertainments and do the death scene from

Romeo and Juliet, and *Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight*, and a piece about a mother and her dying child, and say—I just about ran that town!"

For a moment her face glowed, and then slowly the light died out. "An' there was Sam Newberry."

Grant, regarding her, started slightly. Was it possible, he wondered, that this lank and towed thing before him cherished the memory of a love affair? She was speaking, almost tenderly, her voice breaking at the end of the sentences in a queer effect of shyness.

"He used to play *Romeo* in the play. His father owned the biggest livery stable in town, an' he thought I was almost as great as Sarah Bernhardt, I guess. He—he wanted to marry me. But in those days I thought I was going to hit the high spots and I turned him down to go on with my career."

She emphasized the last word with the accumulated bitterness of years.

"You came to town again?" said Grant.

"After Mom died. I was eighteen then, and like you see me now. The night work and whiskey when I was a kid hadn't helped any, I guess, and the grease paint had made my skin bad before I was ten. Then Mom'd done something to my hair for years—I didn't know it until she died, and it began coming out something awful. I came here and the man at your door wouldn't let me in. So I went to the other managers, just to get even, and they'd look at me and laugh. But I had to go on because—well, because after what I'd written home I couldn't go back.

"You see, I'd started out tellin' 'em you had a part all waiting for me, just like Mom did, and when you turned me down I didn't dare write 'em. So I went on lyin' and lyin' and when I got a part in a three-a-day vaudeville troupe I made it sound like a headline performance."

The tortured eyes narrowed slowly.

"I been doin' that for three years now," she went on. "At first it was easy because it was such a little place;

no first class shows went there, but since the factory's come an' the summer colony, they've opened two theaters and the larger troupes stop there overnight. They're beginnin' to ask why I don't never come through, and Sam—he wants to know—"

Her voice broke.

"He wants me to come back, but I can't go like this. I got to make good an' show 'em before I go. An' I *can* act. I don't care how I look, I can *act*. I've been practisin' an' practisin' by myself until I know all the great parts like *Camille* and *Juliet*."

She leaned over the desk toward him, an awful earnestness in her eyes.

"So I come to you. I thought I'd give it one chance before—before—"

Her voice trailed off and her hands clenched. There was no doubt in Grant's mind what she meant. He looked at her, a great pity in his eyes. Perhaps it would be kinder so. Then, somehow, the picture of the puppy came back into his mind. They had shot the puppy and it had lain there, its head bleeding. He shuddered suddenly and spoke.

"I—I might let you try for a part," he said unexpectedly. "There's one you might possibly fit."

The flare of hope that surged in her face almost frightened him.

"A part for me? You can't mean it!" she exclaimed, her nervous fingers twisting before her flat breast. "An honest to God part with *lines*?"

He nodded brusquely.

"It's not much," he warned. "Only a scene, but it's with the lead and rather important. Of course it's only a try-out, you understand."

She rose suddenly and reached out toward him.

"Give it to me!" she cried. "I want to see it! I want to feel it!"

Grant rummaged in a drawer, then brought out a slender sheaf of paper.

"Take it," he said, and turned away unable to bear the terrible look she turned upon the typewritten lines.

Later he sat at his desk, not exactly regretting his Quixotic impulse, but

sternly suppressing the odd feeling of exhilaration it had given him. If it were fiction, he ruminated, she would probably prove to be a genius and the audience would rise as one and acclaim her great. But he had, after twenty years of intensive study, never met with that kind of success. The audiences he had known were too prone to demand a pound of beauty with every ounce of brains. And those few who slipped by without beauty had at least a subtle charm—irregular perhaps—but the picture of Ethelyn rose in his mind's eye, devoid of every kind of grace, and he groaned as he went back to his work. She was just—a Gump.

III

HALF an hour later he was trying to explain his impulse to Doris Grey. She was perched on the edge of his desk, one slender foot swinging, her firm, capable hand steadying her body by the arm of his chair.

"She's awful," he admitted, "and she'll probably gum up the show. But if you'd seen her—"

Doris grinned cheerfully.

"At it again," she told him. "You're always bitten once every season and you were about due to get it now. Well, I don't blame you. Those down-and-outers always get on my nerves, and I'll do my best to help out, but Cuthbert—" she giggled suddenly, "and her scene is with him too"

Something in her tone made Grant glance up suddenly. Cuthbert was her name for Ronald Duchamp, her leading man.

"How's he gettin' along?" he asked. "I haven't been down to the last two rehearsals."

She regarded him with a gleam in her level grey eyes.

"Stan," she said, "how long have I been with you?"

"Ten years," he answered. "Why do you ask?"

"In all that time have I ever gotten out my little scalping knife?"

"No," he said, grinning. "But you

have a way of getting 'em if you really want to."

She nodded.

"Well, Cuthbert is going to be added to the list," she informed him. "He—he's getting a little too much."

"I'm sorry to have inflicted him on you," he told her. "But men are hard to get this year, you know, and I've an idea he can act."

"You've a lot to unlearn," she told him darkly. "But I say no more or you'll be laying it to professional jealousy. Only, when the show's been on a bit and he's out from under your eye, just slip upstate and take a look at him unbeknownst, will you?"

He nodded.

"Just let me know when you want me," he told her and, as she reached the door, "I'll be up tonight to introduce the new star."

She chuckled.

"I'm dying to hear Levy roar. He's said everything the law allows about Cuthbert, and when this hits him—poor old Uncle Dave!"

IV

GRANT went to the theater early that evening, but the Gump was before him. She was standing outside the door, surveying the door man with smouldering eyes. As Grant approached she met him with a sort of timid familiarity that grated on his nerves.

"Good evening, Chief!" she said. "This lummoX won't let me in to rehearse. You might just explain that I'm one o' the cast."

Grant nodded curtly to the gatekeeper.

"Miss Allen is to be admitted," he said, and tried not to read the look in the man's eyes. Together they entered the door and wandered through the tangle of scenery onto the empty stage where a few lights were burning. The cast was out for dinner.

Ethelyn crossed before the footlights and stood there a minute, outlined in the subdued glare. Grant noted that her slouch was gone and when

she spoke her voice held a triumphant ring.

"Gee, it's good t' get back on the boards again!" she told him. It was quite evident that all the self-confidence that the heavy years had knocked out of her was returning. "And it's a peach of a part. I been rehearsing it in my room. Especially the scene with the lead. It's a grand scene. I don't know how I can ever thank you," she exclaimed to the silent Grant, "except by making the hit of the show," she giggled archly. "I'm going to. I kin feel it. All I needed was a chance, just a little chance to show what I could do."

Grant shuddered a trifle. Her hopeless humility had been bad enough, but this,— However, he reflected, it was quite in character. He had not been coaxing his marionettes through countless productions for twenty years without learning that.

There was the sound of voices and the others returned, chattering as they came. Doris Grey led the procession, a large wedge of pie in her hand. She waved it at Grant gaily.

"Uncle Dave pulled us away before we were done," she said, "and then stopped for another pickle. I told him he'd get what was coming to him when he reached here."

Her eye roved and she sank her voice. "Where's the Gump?"

Grant waved his hand silently.

Ethelyn was coming toward them from across the stage, one of her bony hands extended in a high hand shake.

"This is Miss Grey, I s'ppose," she was saying, "and I'm mighty pleased to join your company. And where's Mr. Duchamp? I'm simply dyin' to meet him—" she laughed archly, "because the biggest part o' my scene's played with him."

From behind Grant there rose a human groan.

"She's *not* going to play Celia!" croaked a voice, "she's *not*!"

"Allow me to introduce Mr. Duchamp!" said Doris Grey cheerfully, as she wheeled and pushed the owner of the groan on the stage.

He was a tall young man with a suspicion of a mustache which he continually caressed with his blond and manicured hand. What he thought of himself could be seen at a glance, and what others thought of him—well Doris had named him Cuthbert and Levy had been known to walk away from an interview with him and deliberately kick over a "practical" tree. He spoke largely and often of his Art as a thing which seemed to be part and parcel of his large and well-groomed person.

Ethelyn regarded him blandly.

"So *you* are Ronald Duchamp," she beamed. "I'm glad you're tall, because you'll go so well with my style."

And for the first time in history, Cuthbert was left with nothing at all to say, merely stared, speechless, down at the bony hand which clasped his unwilling fingers.

After that the rehearsal began. Levy—"Uncle Dave" to the initiated—a large and profane person who had successfully steered a hundred plays from the white and virgin manuscript to a mangled but triumphant opening performance, took his place on a chair below the footlights and opened the proceedings. Occasionally he fell off the chair and when his feelings became too much for him he threw his manuscript at the stage, and climbed over the footlights to retrieve it, returning to his post dusty but relieved. As the evening progressed he grew redder and redder in the face, but the play gradually took form.

Doris had played the part before and this was the road company with a few of the original cast and a few new members. As they steamed through the lines of the second act Levy half turned to Grant. "We're ready for Celia," he said, "where's your girl?"

Grant nodded.

"She's in the wings," he said, "and I think she's been studying her part."

He was right. At the spoken cue she entered, her face showing a ghastly yellow in the footlights, her head held high on her scrawny neck.

Levy looked at her for a moment,

mouth open, then fell off his chair for the fifth time.

"M'God!" he said, "I've got 'em again."

Grant held up his hand.

"Hush," he commanded, "I want to see how she acts."

He saw. Ethelyn rushed down the stage to the exact spot where she had no business to be, and turning to the frozen Cuthbert, delivered her lines. It was a character in which she might conceivably have fitted, since it was a comedy part. But nothing would have fitted her voice. And her conception of acting—through Grant's mind, in that awful moment ran a memory of *Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight*. It was dreadful as a spectacle, but still more awful to see her perfect self-complacency, for obviously Ethelyn was out to out-Sarah The Bernhardt.

At length it was over. With a final triumphant glance over her shoulder at the foot-lights, she left the stage, stumbling as she went over a bit of scenery, and Doris Grey came on for a scene with Cuthbert. There was the hint of a grin on her face, sternly suppressed, but evident to Grant's practised perceptions. And she was staring, not at Ethelyn but at Cuthbert where he stood, mouth open in a sort of horrified trance.

Under cover of her lines Grant answered Levy's frantic attack.

"It's only a try-out, of course," he said. "You don't have to take the girl. But I thought perhaps you—you might lick her into shape—"

"Shape!" wailed the other. "Shape! She hasn't any shape! M'God! You send me a bunch of spare ribs that talks like a squeaky slate and tell me to make an actress when I got my hands full with that human 'I am it' up there, and the whole play going to the devil so fast you can't even see the dust—"

He threw the manuscript furiously at Cuthbert and vaulted over the foot-lights.

"Not there!" he yelled, "not up-stage like that. Do you want the star to turn

her back on the audience, you idiot—you double-dyed bundle of pink satchet, you—"

He glared and returned to Grant, the crumpled manuscript in his hand.

"I got enough troubles," he announced, "without any more of 'em humping themselves on the stage and doing an imitation of Eva Tanguay. You can take your little friend down to Johnson's company. He doesn't know real acting from singing into a phonograph."

Grant shook his head regretfully.

"No," he said, "she's had her chance and you're right. She's awful. I guess she'll have to go."

"Don't fire the kid," said Doris.

Grant jumped to find her at his elbow, her brief scene finished.

"She's down and out. I can see that. Can't she come along with the troupe in some way? You can give her the job of wardrobe mistress, you know. It'd be plain murder to turn her own now."

Grant looked at her gratefully.

"I'll do it," he said, and sent for the Gump. She came, the glow of self-satisfaction still on her sallow face.

"I kind of thought you'd be sending for me," she said.

Grant cleared his throat.

"I—I," he began, and stopped.

Doris spoke for him.

"Mr. Grant is afraid you're not built for the part, Miss Allen," she said. "He needs a smaller woman for the rôle. You see you—well—you're taller than I am."

Ethelyn looked at Grant dumbly. He nodded.

"Yes, that's it," he said, "I—I didn't realize how—how tall you were until I saw you on the stage with Mr. Duchamp, and the part calls for a smaller woman."

Ethelyn clutched the crumpled sheets of paper to her breast.

"You're going to take it away from me?" she said, "you mean you're going to take it away from me?"

He cleared his throat again.

"I—I'm afraid so. But I wondered

if you'd accept the job of wardrobe mistress; we—we need one to travel with the company, and I—I thought—"

The girl stared at him, the papers still clutched against her breast. She was like a wounded animal at bay.

"A wardrobe mistress," she was saying, "a wardrobe mistress, when I might have played a part and acted—"

Her eyes were dreadful to see. Grant found a queer ache in his throat and Levy had turned away. Doris Grey spoke suddenly with a little gasping cough.

"You don't understand," she said, "Mr. Grant—he means more than a wardrobe mistress. That's just on the side. What he really wants is for you to understudy me."

The girl looked at her and slowly the sheets fluttered from her relaxed fingers to the floor. She heaved a little sigh of happiness and straightened her bent shoulders.

"I should be pleased to accept the position," she announced. "This part here wasn't really so very good after all, and all I want is a chance."

Later Doris faced Grant in her machine.

"I couldn't help it," she said. "You couldn't help it yourself. I knew in another minute you'd be offering her the lead and I—I got there first."

"But you—" he sputtered, "can you picture her in your part?"

She chuckled. "I've been playing for ten years. Have you ever known me to miss a night?"

He shook his head.

"No, but—"

"But me no buts!"

And then, more seriously, "We may be a couple of fools, but we've saved a human life tonight!"

V

THE rehearsals drew to a close and the company left, playing a miserable and profane month of one night stands in New Jersey. It was not a happy family. Grace Fenton, the ingénue, was engaged in looking backward at the

time when she had played to adoring audiences in Stock, or forward to the time when she would play to equally adoring audiences on Broadway. She got on Doris Grey's nerves and the latter told her so gently but firmly. Doris had a way of getting rid of those that bored her which was efficient if nothing else. Grace Fenton fell back upon the character woman who supplanted Ethelyn for companionship, and the two sulked and said unpleasant things about the star, who grinned to herself and went serenely on her way.

Also, there was a feud between Doris and Cuthbert. It had to do with many things, but culminated in the playing of the great scene in the third act. It was Doris' scene really. She was the star and she should have played it up stage, gloriously occupying the place of vantage, while her lead, quarter back to the audience, subdued his personality to hers. But Cuthbert was not that kind. If he had been conceited in New York he was insufferable now—his mail having been enlarged by a few mash notes. As time went on he edged more and more upon Doris' preserves and day by day played further up stage, throwing the star into the subordinate position. She spoke to him once, but his answer silenced her.

"Of course," he said, stroking his infant mustache, "of course, if you are afraid of my snatching your laurels, Miss Grey—"

After that she said nothing, but there was a strained look about her mouth and Levy, regarding her nervously, ventured to protest.

"Now, don't you start anything, Doris," he begged. "We can't afford to break up the show just because a trained ass has broken into the pasture. And he *does* make a hit with the ladies. That eyebrow he wears on his lip gets 'em every time."

Doris made no direct reply.

"There's a rip in my dress where that idiot stepped on it in the love scene," she said. "Some day he's going to get bitten when he kisses me in the last act. Ugh!" she shrugged her

shoulders, "where's the Gump? She'll have to mend it before tonight."

"Behind somewhere," he told her. "Have you noticed her lately?"

"Noticed!" she said. "Have I noticed anything else since we left New York? She's like the evil eye, watching until she gives me the creeps. If I live through it won't be her fault. She'd cheerfully murder me for the part." She laughed suddenly. "She's got it figured out that I'm deadly jealous of her and got Grant to take away that part from her for fear she'd gum up my success."

"She's been looking peeked lately," said Levy. "Get's worse every day. She's got something on her mind."

"It's her hair," said Doris lightly. "it looks as though she boiled it in lye every week," and she walked across the stage to her dressing room where the Gump bent over a bit of sewing.

"Hallo!" she said, and then, at the girl's look,

"No hope tonight, I'm as fit as a fiddle! But cheer up, I might die any day. You never can tell!"

Ethelyn looked down, a dull red suffusing her cheeks. She was no better looking than when she had left New York, being, of anything, thinner and more gaunt. But there was a new lift to her shoulders, a hopeful light in her eye. She was understudying the star, and someday—. If it would only come soon—.

And four days later it happened. Levy, gazing aghast at a message in his hand, uttered an expletive and hastened up to a room at the hotel. He was admitted by the maid.

"She's ill," she told him. "I—I don't know whether you can see her or not—the Doctor said—"

Levy brushed her aside.

"I've got to see her!" he said. "It's six o'clock and the show begins at eight. I've got to see her."

A voice came from the next room. It was a small weak voice.

"Come in," it said, "I think I can see you now. The pain isn't so bad."

Levy entered the room, casting a

frightened glance at the bed. Then his eye brightened. Doris was lying there propped up on the pillows and there was nothing alarming in her countenance. At his look she closed her eyes and groaned slightly, but when she opened them again there was the suspicion of a twinkle in the corners.

"Gad!" said Levy, "but you gave me a turn! What's the idea?"

She shook her head.

"I'm a very sick woman," she told him. "Ask the doctor."

His face fell.

"You don't look it," he said, doubtfully.

"Appearances are deceptive. I wouldn't have let you in if I hadn't thought you were going to be more sympathetic." Her mouth was dimpling again and he grinned back a bit doubtfully.

"Hadn't you better cut out the acting?" he said, "I don't get the idea, but the show's due to begin pretty soon, and you'd better pile out and have your dinner."

She shook her head.

"I'm not going to act tonight," she told him.

"You're not!" he stared at her, "you're *not*!"

She moaned slightly.

"I'm very sick," she repeated, "very sick indeed."

"But what seems to be the matter?" he asked suspiciously.

"I don't know," she confessed, "and the doctor wasn't sure. It might be pneumonia, or anything."

He edged toward the door.

"If you're going to get it, you've got it by now," she said, grinning broadly, and he drew nearer again, regarding her with smoldering wrath.

"I want to know what you're game is. You haven't fallen down on the show for ten years and I don't understand it at all."

"You will," she told him sweetly, "if you think a bit, but anyway I don't know what you're talking about. When I let you see how sick I am you oughtn't to talk that way. If you go on acting

like this I'll have to send you away. I'm not feeling strong enough to be bullied."

"Look here," he said desperately, "I wasn't supposed to tell, but Grant's coming to the show tonight."

She nodded. "I know. He wrote me last week that he would be here."

"Oh!" he regarded her, puzzled. "And still you go right on acting like this—"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He's not coming to see me act," she told him. "He's seen me in the part a hundred times."

Suddenly his eye lighted in understanding.

"I get you!" he said. "It's Cuthbert you're after, and if you're not there it will throw him out. But I don't know how we'll fill the part. I suppose Grace Fenton will have to take it—"

His voice died away. "But who would take her place?"

She was watching him maliciously.

"You forget that we travel with an understudy," she informed him.

He started.

"M'God!" he said, "you're not talking about the Gump!"

"Why not? It's nothing but an up-state jay town. If you come out before the curtain and tell 'em I'm sick and the well-known actress, fresh from Broadway successes, Miss Ethelyn Allen, has consented to take the part the rubes won't know the difference. Just lay it on thick enough and they'll all think she's somebody they ought to know about. She can wear my dresses and—"

"But she's awful!" he wailed. "Why—why—"

For an instant his arms sawed the air, and it seemed as if he would foam at the mouth, then his shoulders drooped and he admitted his defeat.

"You've got me," he said. "There's no other way out. It's too late to send to New York for some one else—the thing we counted on in a pinch."

He regarded her grimly. "If I weren't wanting to wring your neck I could love you for doing it to Cuthbert, but

as it is—I hope you get yours!"

"I will," she told him. "I've got to lie here and miss out on seeing Cuthbert embrace her and plant a passionate kiss on her brow in the third act."

She giggled suddenly and turned the giggle into a groan. Then—

"You seem to forget I'm a sick woman and mustn't be excited," she reproved him. "Why don't you go and break the news to Ethelyn?"

VI

HALF an hour later he had told her. She stood regarding him with an expression which in any one else might have been starry-eyed. With the Gump it was merely a damp and fishy look.

"Gee!" she said, clutching her hands at her flat breast. "Gee! Me the lead—and tonight!"

Levy regarded her nervously.

"Think you can get on without rehearsal?" he inquired. "It's too late for a real one now, but perhaps—"

She lifted her head still higher on her scrawny neck.

"I know it all," she told him, "every word! And I shan't just imitate Miss Grey, neither. There's all sorts of things she's never thought of that I'm going to put in. I've never liked the way she plays the part, and I'm going to put some real life into it. You just get right out in front and I'll show you what real acting is like!"

Levy shuddered.

"Now, I wouldn't do that," he protested. "Miss Grey's played the part for some time and I—"

"She's a back number," Ethelyn informed him. "I didn't want to say anything before because I didn't like to hurt her feelings, but she ain't got no real soul in her work. I—I'm going to play that part like it should be played."

Jerking her head in triumph she stepped into the dressing room marked with a large blue star and closed the door.

Levy stared after her for an instant, then passed on to the dressing room of

Ronald Duchamp. That gentleman was regarding his image in the mirror and for an instant did not heed the import of Levy's words. When their meaning penetrated to his brain he became frankly hysterical.

"But I won't!" he said. "My dear man—think of my Art, what would my audience think of—"

"The devil!" finished Levy crudely, and stepped out the door, a cheerful grin upon his countenance. This part of the mess had not been half bad. For an instant he almost loved Doris Grey.

Then, with a sigh and a shake of his head he passed onto the stage, empty as yet, and unlighted.

VII

AT eight-thirty Stanley Grant's car pulled up at the theater door. The play was already in progress and he slipped in a side exit, missing the anxious eye of Levy who waited in the lobby. Grant liked to slip in unheralded at his own productions and hear the remarks of the public. It was a typical jay-town crowd, he ruminated as he slipped into an empty seat and stared about him. Grace Fenton was holding the stage with a bit of humor and he smiled to himself at their interest.

But something in the tenseness about him was strange. They were staring not at Grace, but at the wing beyond. It was as though they were waiting for something. For the star's entrance, of course, he told himself, but, vaguely, he wondered. Popular as she was, Doris Grey had never before had an audience quite like this.

Then the green portières opened and a woman entered the scene. She was dressed magnificently in a gown of dull green, cut in daring lowness and iridescent with spangles. It was one of Doris Grey's most entrancing costumes, but Grant felt a sinking sensation and held onto the arm of his chair, for, above the gorgeous creation, rose the scrawny neck and knotty shoulders of the Gump.

He gasped and waited for the roof to fall, for the people about him to rise and throw things at the stage. They did rise, some of them, to their feet, but they did not throw things. Instead, they clapped loudly and one or two of them cheered.

Grant sat there, staring stupidly ahead. He began to wonder vaguely what he had eaten for dinner and whether that glass of Port—

The Gump bowed in awkward graciousness and waited for the applause to die away, and then, opening her lips, went on with the part.

After that Grant knew it was a nightmare. Nothing like that could happen on a real stage, with a real audience looking on without murder being done. The Gump steamed through her lines, accenting the least of them with relish and importance which made of the part a shrieking farce. She threw her arms about in an abandonment of gesture which seemed to fill the stage and when she descended upon Cuthbert it was with the energy of a sportive steam-roller. But through it all the audience followed her. When she wept it wept. When she brought forth a humorous line, pausing just before the end with vaudevillian pointedness, they roared with laughter. They rose to her playing and cheered between acts with hearty appreciation.

And Cuthbert, overshadowed by her largeness, rendered insipid by her over emphasis—half hysterical and wholly furious was dragged from pillar to post until in the end he became a white and subdued thing, jumping when she addressed a line to him, as though she had cracked a whip. While through it all the Gump romped and roared, appearing ever more awful in some new magnificence of borrowed plumage.

And Grant, clutching the sides of his seat, watched the stage, looking neither to left nor right for fear the audience about him would read insanity in his eyes.

It was not until the curtain had gone down for the last time and the Gump, red with success, was led forward by

a perspiring Levy for her curtain speech, that he came to himself. Her words began to trickle into his brain, first one at a time, then, suddenly in a great burst of light——

"Gratifying—chawmed—after success on Broadway—great to be *home* again."

VIII

It was ten minutes later that he came to her dressing-room. It was filled to overflowing, but at sight of him she made room on the seat beside herself. On the other side sat a stocky young man in brown who was staring at her with dazzled eyes.

"Mr. Grant," she said, introducing him to the company at large with a magnificent wave of her hand. "Stanley Grant, y' know. My manager."

Then turning to him, her head held high under a greenish halo of frowzy hair, she spoke.

"I was just telling the home folks, Mr. Grant, that I'm coming back to 'em. Dusé left the stage when she was at th' height of her triumphs, y' know.

And I—well, I was just announcin' my engagement to Mr. Newberry o' the Palace Livery Stable. I've decided to give up th' stage with it's glittering temptations forever. O' course I won't be above playing leads in the town productions, but I renounce the gilded life o' the Great White Way!"

There was a murmur of approbation and awe about her and Grant found twenty pairs of eyes fixed upon him to see how he would take his loss.

"I'm sorry," he said, truthfully. "I—I hate to lose you—your place in the dramatic world is—er—unique, Miss Allen."

"I know," she said, "but I give it up forever!"

With a gesture which was angularly superb she held out a blue velvet cloak to the stalwart man beside her. He threw it about her shoulders with the air of one encompassing a pearl of great price; and then, triumphant, followed by her train, she passed to the door, paused for an instant and—

"Say 'ta-ta' to little old Broadway f' me!" she said and swept out of Grant's life forever.



TOWNS

By Harold Cook

I THOUGHT towns were unbeautiful
And full of sullen pain,
With never any tenderness
Nor gentleness of rain.

But now I know that they may be
Bright and very fair,
For, passing, I gazed in a door
And saw you standing there.



A MAN begins to love a woman the moment he begins to fear to compromise her.

FIFTEEN MINUTES

By Ben Hecht

BEFORE he was married, Thompson was in a state of mental and physical inertia that had earned him the reputation of a young man of excellent habits and unusual virtues. Where other youths of his acquaintance squandered their little earnings in sad little debauches and shifted restlessly from one pusillanimous job to another, sometimes even packing their goods and turning their faces to new horizons, Thompson buried himself in the hole of his own digging, gravitated placidly in the rut of his own making, and serenely regarded the world outside his ken with the intolerant smile of a superior nature.

His prejudice against drink, his frequent dissertations concerning the evil of cabarets, the mysterious dangers surrounding the modern dances, and the lamentably vulgar trend of the generation in general convinced the veteran prune-eaters of Mrs. Severin's boarding-house that he was a man of ideals.

Women of the better sort took to him instinctively, recognizing in him a fine, chivalrous conception of their sex. This conception inspired him to remove his hat in department store elevators, to inquire solicitously of Mrs. Severin every evening of the nine years if she would mind if he smoked, and to pat little children on the head and ask of them with engaging earnestness how old they were. Further, it caused him to look askance—if not sometimes with actual horror—upon the growth of immodesty that was worse among, as he termed them, "the rouged and misguided home-wreckers who have forgotten the beauties of the fireside." He did not, he

affirmed, believe in men allowing their women to share their vices.

Many other illuminating comments could be made on the character of Thompson before his marriage. Suffice to recount that his physical laziness and his utter vacuity established him during these nine years as a splendidly steady, high-minded young man. And also he was always in demand by the two school-teachers, the bald-headed photographer, the very stout widow and such other finer elements as formed the *élite* of Mrs. Severin's table, for all their elaborately organized expeditions to the movies and the theater and their Sunday excursions to the heart of nature when, with the aid of opera-glasses, they delighted themselves discovering wonderful birds in the wilds littered with crackerjack boxes and abandoned picnic plates.

At twenty-eight Thompson married a woman whom even his closest friends agreed was his equal. That is, it was conceded by them that the woman Thompson had selected to marry was a creature worthy of the noble standards he had held always of the sex. She had appeared at Mrs. Severin's table, shy, well mannered, modestly dressed and with a keen appreciation of her new neighbors' worthiness. After the second week she had asked timidly to be permitted to remain in the parlor following dinner until the rain ceased outside. Inasmuch as it was the night usually set aside for readings from the poets by Mr. Thompson, the favor was only dubiously granted. But there was none to regret the young woman's presence. She revealed, in fact, as fine and keen an appreciation of literature as

could be expected of one denied the advantages of the many evenings which had preceded her. As it was she sat silent during the debate led by the two school-teachers, but thrilling perceptibly to Thompson's sonorous recitations from Longfellow and Whittier.

II

TEN months after this event Thompson and the young woman, whose name happened to be Elsie, were married. The courtship must be left to the imagination of such readers as fancy themselves possessed of a sophisticated humor. The exemplary elations of the bridal pair must likewise be denied precious white paper. If it were not for the fact that six years after his marriage Thompson sat in the "library" of his home, an odd frown on his face, a desperate perplexity in his thought, the whole matter of the Thompsons might indeed be intelligently dropped. But in the lives of Thompson and his wife there are fifteen minutes worthy of the hurried historian. What followed these fifteen minutes and what preceded them are things too holy for recording by any other than the angel of heaven or perhaps the author of "Pollyanna."

So—at a quarter of eight on an evening in May six years after his marriage—Thompson sat, as chronicled, frowning oddly and perplexed. Elsie was still in the kitchen tidying up. When she finished she would come in and turn on the light. In the meantime he would sit in the dark. It somehow suited his mood.

Thompson with a mood! To select the fifteen minutes of a man's life when he steps out of character, when he does, says or thinks things which he has never done, said or thought before and will never again! To limit the saint when he exchanges his halo for the bladder and the slapstick, to spotlight the villain in his single act of charity! By such ruses may truth for a moment be surprised—a hussy caught in negligée.

How it happened that Thompson arrived at such a condition is one of the

phenomena of life concerning which your puppeteer must for the present at least keep gravely silent. But there it was—the mood, the peculiar twilight of emotion, the wandering barb of introspection, crawling bewilderedly through the virgin caverns of his heart and mind. The thing had started earlier in the day and he had gone about his business as clerk in the commission house fronting the river with a sense of detachment from things about him. He had come home and eaten his dinner in silence. And he sat now contemplating, as one might contemplate the rather sudden appearance of a third arm on one's person, the perplexing fact that his life was empty.

Like a machine long junked and rusted, Thompson's brain had of its own volition stirred itself into action. Thoughts were creaking out of it. As a man of ideals Thompson had naturally never found it necessary to think, or perhaps even advisable. There were certain ideas—ideas of right and wrong, for instance—which he had long ago fitted into his head. There were certain highly proper, noble theories which he had carefully inserted whole into his gray matter. And presto!—the business of life had been solved. In emergencies, moral or conversational or ethical, recourse to this catalogued mental stock pointed the way, solved the difficulty. Thus by reaching to the shelf for an adage, a commandment, a properly tagged and price-marked code—in short, by accepting grimly, idealistically, what he knew—Thompson had through his life found no impulse to disorder the fine, accurate balance of his ideas with any thinking.

For instance—and the digression establishes a bit firmer the background for these fifteen minutes with which the present history most concerns itself—after his marriage Thompson had taken a lofty inventory of this stock of his. A woman's place was in the home and a man's duty was to love, honor and obey his wife. These were mental commodities of imposing bulk in his warehouse. Accordingly Mrs. Thompson had re-

mained in her home and he to the best extent of his abilities had loved, honored and obeyed her. A man's home was his first and deepest concern, his wife his first and chiefest interest.

Upon these premises the Thompsons had lived and thrived, doing solemnly only those things which befitted respectable folk, exchanging with solemnity only such fancies as did not violate the ideal of Puritania. And as a result—to the scurrilous there is nothing quite so hideous as the success of virtue—life for the Thompsons had been a business approaching nobility of spirit. They had consorted with the amiable and yet high-minded tolerance of persons honestly intent upon living in the light of their finest perceptions. They had moved in a continual Sabbath.

To find life empty after such painstaking piety! With the thought, the chill of an emotion approaching terror coursed through Thompson as he sat in the dark. He struggled to recover the balance of ideas, the innocuous complacency of former meditations. But the thing persisted, flaunting itself as from some external source when he had hurled it from his conscious thought. Empty and desolate. Living in a humdrum of trifles. Imprisoned by four walls bearing the name Home. With a world unknown tumbling about outside his cell.

Like a man surrendering himself to an undertow encountered in a placid stretch of sea, Thompson went down, down into the depths of his mood. Hallucinations beset him. Visions of horrible outline crossed his eye. And what were these things that Thompson saw? They were nothing other than he had seen all his life. It is the familiar which becomes most monstrous, most absurd, when beheld in an unfamiliar light. It is the norm which is the true gargoyle to the eye turned inward.

And the light in which Thompson now beheld the familiar outlines of his life was the wholly strange tint of his mood. He had lived the six years not

only content, but with the elation which comes to a man who accomplishes firmly an appointed task. He had never strayed in thought beyond the accepted confines of what were in his mind labelled virtue and righteousness, duty and decency. And now there had come upon him a nostalgia for lands never visited.

The emotion, though intense, was vague. It did not name precisely for him things that were desirable—the sway and lilt of women, the shouts and laughter of men drinking, the fancy-free adventure over the arcs of the earth—yet these generally he desired, visioning them as a man blind might vision objects about him and their colors.

The vagueness of his desires, the uncentered spur of his restlessness, was equalled by a specific detail, which on the other hand complicated his mood with a disgust approaching nausea. This detail concerned itself with the familiar. With the appearance, the thoughts, the doings of his wife. With the odors of his home. With the paraphernalia of his own day. He saw them as things monotonous, felt them like a swathing about his lungs. The careful unselfishness toward Elsie, the observation of a thousand intricate trifles of conduct, the coming home each evening to the same walls, the same face and, worst idiocy of all, to the identical words, gestures, grimaces of the day before. Other men did things. Just what Thompson was unable to declare to himself. Went to stag parties, for instance. Did something anyway, something wonderfully and violently different than he did.

A part of Thompson remained observant and terrified as he sank deeper. It was as if he had divided himself into the two classical complements of being. One of these remained wringing its hands at the spectacle of the other—a teetotaler Siamese watching its umbilical twin engaged in terrific debauch.

As he journeyed into the depths of his mood the detail that had nauseated

him gave place abruptly to the vagueness of his unrest. And Thompson the complacent, the idealist, the immaculate husband, thirsted for things which may discreetly be labelled adventure. It was a thirst which had never come upon him in his pre-marital days. But, like a belated springtime, it burst suddenly to bloom. He grew dizzy and shut his eyes. And visions crowded upon him. The word sex included everything but his wife. The thought of love and beauty evolved images of women with roses in their teeth and black shawls slung across red-satin shoulders.

So much for the Thompson who went plunging head first toward the bottom of his mood. The other Thompson, the terrified creature who remained on the brink wringing his hands, is perhaps of more psychological, if elusive, importance. This was the real, or to strain at the Darwinian proprieties, the unreal, Thompson—this the fellow loaded with chunks of ideas and bulging with carefully labelled ethics. And during these moments—fifteen of them—he perceived himself in various astounding lights. The things he had hoarded with miserly zeal he saw now being plucked from their shelves and tumbled upon the air. He saw himself sinning. And yet he knew it could not be sin, if he was accomplishing it.

Was there something wrong with him? Why didn't Elsie hurry in from the kitchen? No, he would get up and follow himself, as it were, into the night. Walk, walk. Go somewhere. Do something. This living between four walls! This carrying the four walls about with him! This not daring to live as men lived! And how was it men lived? Anyway but his way. With their brains somehow different. With different ideas and faces. Anything but the insufferable emptiness of a life based upon doing things always the same and always without meaning. That was it—meaning. Other men had *meaning* in their lives. He had none. He would break away.

And here for the moment both Thompsons united again, both stood

overlooking with awed and enchanted eyes a promised land. A land in which there were no Elsies, no Thompsons.

A pain passed through Thompson's head as he stared at the dark of the room. He lifted his hand and caressed his brow.

III.

It was the maid's day off. Mrs. Thompson hung the frying pan on its appointed hook, smoothed out her apron and raised her hand toward the chain of the electric light. As she did so a distressing pain shot through her. She paused, her hand in mid-air, her pleasant face contorted mildly. Dropping her arm to her side she increased this contortion into a frown. With eyes a bit too earnest for observing, she searched the ordered walls of her kitchen with its rows of utensils hung from the mid-wall moulding, its white enameled sink, its business-like tables and its innumerable cloths.

Of late Mrs. Thompson had found this part of her day the most difficult. Perhaps it was that the day tired her. But why? She did nothing. She fastened a particularly earnest stare at the frying pan. Nothing but prepare the dinner for Harold, tidy the house, shop, visit a half hour with some wholly uninteresting creature who, like herself, did nothing, and, therefore, had never anything to say.

Mrs. Thompson thought of Harold awaiting her in the "library." A warmth came into her thought immediately. But also another distressing attack of the pain occurred. The warmth vanished, Harold did nothing. It seemed to her that after all people never did anything at all in the world. But what a shameless thing to have such an idea. Mrs. Thompson frowned at herself. Wasn't she the happiest married woman in the world? And wasn't Harold dear and sweet and good? Yet there was no evading the fact that they never did anything but just sit and look at each other. While other people did things. On their way

to Billy Sunday's revival, for instance, they had passed thousands of people who were hurrying to places to do things.

Mrs. Thompson still remained under the lighted electric globe. In a moment she would go in and join Harold. She sighed. She felt restless. Her eyes turned from the wall toward the window and she observed the night. For several moments she stood thinking nothing, but feeling an inexplicable sadness. Then she said to herself:

"I've eaten something that doesn't agree with me. Oh, what an awful pain. It must have been that canned salmon. I wonder if Harold has felt it?"

She became at once concerned. Reaching up this time, she turned out the light without further hesitation and walked toward the "library." She was startled as she approached it to see it in darkness. Where was Harold?

A curious sense of fear possessed her. Something had happened to him! She caught her breath and walked swiftly into the room. A moment later she stood on the threshold staring at her husband. He was sitting in his

large chair, his hand passing haltingly over his forehead and blinking at the sudden light.

She smiled with relief. What an odd fear that was that had come over her in the hall.

"Do you feel ill, Harold?" she asked. "I've had the worst pains in my tummy just now. It must have been that canned salmon."

Thompson stared at her, his eyes still blinking. A grimace slowly wrinkled his face.

"Yes, I have them, too," he answered, covering his waistcoat with his hands; "I've been having them for the last fifteen minutes. It must have been that salmon. I thought it tasted odd."

"It was," announced Mrs. Thompson with conviction. "You can never trust canned salmon. I only hope it's nothing serious."

Thompson groaned suddenly in his chair.

"Oh, dear," his wife exclaimed, "Isn't it dreadful? I'll go get the pills."

A light broke over Thompson's face. He raised his eyes and, with a smiling tenderness, watched his wife turn and walk toward the bathroom.



IT is the knowledge that his wife is not sought by other men that makes a man happy: it is the knowledge that her husband is not sought by other women that makes a woman furious.



A SUCCESSFUL business man is one who makes more than his wife can spend. A successful business woman is one who knows how to land such a man.



THE sorest blow a woman can suffer is to have her confidence in her husband justified.



WHY IS IT?

By Elinor Maxwell

HE seldom tells me he loves me.

He never addresses me as anything but "Mrs. Cameron," or "Frog-legs," and all the time I am dying to be called "Dearest beloved."

He never comments on the perfectly exquisite perfume for which I go into debt.

He doesn't like the way I dress, and he says my mouth is too big.

He wonders why I wear my hair puffed out over my ears, and he detests my bangs.

He is really much too fat, his nails are terrible, and his eye-brows too long.

When we fuss, he always tries to make me think that I was in the wrong and that I am the one who owes the apology. He invariably ends by saying, "Oh, well, you're just a child after all, and I really ought to spank you," and all the time I realize that I am a fine, sensible woman—safe and sane, calm and collected.

He calls me "a cute kid," and way down in my heart I am secretly longing to be taken for a woman of mystery!

He says I'm his "little doll" and that I have "darling little ankles," and all the while I am trying to look like Nazimova.

He makes fun of me, and teases me, and annoys me. He says I'm too young for almost any use at all. He doesn't consider my opinion worth a whoop in the bucket, and when I try to talk seriously of Life's Great Problems, he spoils everything by kissing me.

And, notwithstanding all this, I'll be darned if I don't love him more than anyone else in the world!



MODESTY and conscience are identical. Both originate in the fear that someone may be looking.



WHEN the girl you kiss gives as good as you give, you are not getting firsts.



LIFE is a comedy to him who owes and a tragedy to him who pays.

THE RUBBER BAND

By Burton Kline

I NEARLY died of the shock. There they were, the first familiar faces I saw on the boat-landing, Marian Agnew and her husband Sam; although their presence together was not all of the shock. The chief of it was that Marian was gracious to me, and devoted to her husband. And this on the spot where I had seen him alone not three weeks before.

* * *

Three weeks before I had seen him there, for the first time in five years. I knew it was he. There was no mistaking the haughty chin, his hooked nose, his grey eyes, the somewhat distinguished features generally. Besides, afterward, there was his name on the hotel register in proof of him—*Samuel D. Agnew, New York*. And the moment I saw him, and the company with him, I knew what he was about. This was his fling, the howling tear he had promised himself years ago. He was out for amusement—and getting precious little of it, by all appearances.

That may have been because he was sixty now—and looked it. His hair, when he removed his hat sometimes to fan himself, had that humorous thinness which brings age and infancy so absurdly close together. Yet even had he kept his rakish Panama religiously fast to his head, other signs of his years would have betrayed him—the crow-feet about his eyes, and the crack in his laugh. He was laughing boisterously, too—or trying so to laugh.

Two strange girls were laughing with him. They freely showed their limbs—one pair of them too thick and the other too thin. And otherwise they did their best to look and act a devilish part and

succeeded with their deviltry as little as he with his. Indeed they may have been wantons, but they little enough looked it. One of the pair, the more shapely, wore a modest enough dark brown jersey suit, the other an innocent sky-blue sweater. Both giggled and wriggled, and wore dowdy white duck hats.

"Well, this chicken I'm telling you about was daffy on me at the time."

I was near enough to catch this much of his narrative—and was obliged to stifle a laugh at hearing his straining endeavors to cut the capers of a devil. Whereas the girls would have been far more impressed with his wickedness if he had stuck to his habitual diction.

"And this chicken says to me, 'Dick,' says she"—so the tale ran on. And for all his wild humor I saw he couldn't quite come to the point of braving it out in his own name. Above all else, this saintly devil had picked quaint and quiet Nantucket for his fling!

We had all been passengers aboard the *Lillian*, the deceptively smart appearing but really lumbering old cat-boat which makes pretense of sailing up the inland harbor of Wauwinet, if the wind is safely enough astern, and otherwise noses along under power of a weak and weary motor. Sam and they had been in the stern, and I amidst-ships, with a crowd of other passengers seated on chairs between, so that he hadn't noticed my presence, and not to embarrass him I had kept apart.

Nevertheless at Wauwinet, as I strolled up that stretch of blinding yellow sand, I came upon them again, sprawled on the beach, all three of them. The more plump of the two girls had

spread out her form in a more successful essay at the voluptuous, with the jersey of her suit seeking out her curves. Both of them laughed industriously, not so much at Sam Agnew's stories, I suspect, as at Sam Agnew himself. It must have been that, because their laughter had become hearty and genuine. He was, there's no denying it, so awfully funny at his sin.

Later on in the week I saw him again, on the Cliff beach, searching the crowd for some one willing to respond to his ogling. This time he had bared his opalescent bald head and committed his undeniably spare body to public gaze in a jaunty jersey bathing suit of a brave blue, with golden bands across the breeches and shirt, and made display of what prowess he possessed in the water. For some time I watched him from a distance. Rarely have I seen anything so exquisite as his antics at playing the rake.

Presently I saw a great light in his face, and caught him edging closer to the beach. There, over my shoulder, I marked the object of his interest issuing from the bath-house. Every one else marked her with me. She was tall and she was plump, she was shapely and she was blonde, with a kind of babyish prettiness in her round face and her wide blue eyes. There she came, in a baby-blue bathing suit of silk jersey that clung to her figure, even in the dry state, like fleshings, making a clean breast of all that Nature had done for her. With the stateliness of an entire belief in herself she stepped majestically down the sand and dipped a toe in the water, while the hundred or two idlers on the sand and the other two hundred in the gentle surf ceased all other occupation and watched her.

Sam Agnew had stationed himself by then directly in the path she appeared to have chosen into the deeps. There he stood in his own spare majesty, with his arms folded to squeeze out his muscles into the fullest display of his manhood. Slowly the opulent specimen of femininity waded toward him. Step by step she drew nearer. If she happened

to be thinking of anything, I suppose it was of the chill of the deepening water rising about her. Indeed she saw my friend only in time to avoid knocking him down.

"Beg pardon!" I heard, or rather saw her lips framing the words.

"Don't mention it, you big booful baby!" I very distinctly heard Sam Agnew utter.

Was the lady offended? Did she blaze out on him in righteous wrath? Even that would have titillated the male in the man. But she crushed him utterly. With a single surprised glance up and down Sam Agnew's spindling person, she—laughed. And so did the highly corpulent old gentleman with her.

Until then Sam Agnew had left unnoticed, as did all the rest of us, for that matter, the corpulent old gentleman and the other men and women who, it was clear now, were the blonde beauty's companions.

All of them laughed at Sam. Everybody laughed at him. At once the crowd in the water nearby had sensed what had happened—or easily read it in Sam Agnew's crestfallen face, and laughed at him outright. Whereat Sam dived like mad, and paddled away in a flutter of confusion.

In a moment or two I was able to catch up with him, and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Bless my soul, is it you!" he shouted, delighted with the refuge of any sort of legitimate companionship. "Where on earth did you drop from? I'm jolly well glad to see you!" And we touched bottom to shake hands. "How long have you been here? Isn't this water great? For the first time in my life I've struck water I could stay in half an hour without looking as blue as I feel!"

"Didn't you know she was a bride?" I cut him short.

"Bride? Who? What bride?" he made pretense of his innocence.

"The big booful baby in baby-blue. I saw it, Samuel."

He grinned sheepishly and busily scratched the bottom with his toe.

"Pippin, isn't she?" he suddenly looked up to say in defiance. "But was that frightful tub her husband? He's years older than she. Years older than I!"

"They're stopping at my hotel. And quite devoted—for the present. You'd better wait, at least until next season, old man."

He grinned more broadly. "Oh, I may strike her in New York this winter. She's not the kind to be lost in a crowd."

"So this is the fling, is it, Sam?"

With the engaging heartiness of a boy, which he still was, Sam Agnew laughed.

"Yes," he said, "I'm having a little turn. High time, don't you think?"

"How's it going?"

"Oh, I won a dollar at the Fair, yesterday. And the funny part of it was I got the dollar!"

"How's it going?" I repeated—or, more properly, accused.

For a moment Sam Agnew gave me his eye. Then he turned it away to the far horizon, but not so far away but that I could mark the hunger in it.

I waited for his answer, and he turned to say, quite candidly,

"Rotten!"

That afternoon I fished him out of his hotel.

"I hope I'm not spoiling any giddy plans?" I apologized for the intrusion.

"You're a Godsend!" And he wrung my hand in proof of his sincerity.

II.

I KNEW what he needed, and wanted, and so I took him over to 'Sconset. The busses now make it in half an hour, but we drove, to have the island to ourselves for a talk.

"'Sconset's gone to the devil!" said Sam, after we'd lumbered along in silence for a while.

"A giddy gallant like you should find some amusement there," I insisted.

"It's gone to the devil. Nobody's there this year."

"The war, you mean?"

"It isn't the war, it's the millionaires. I beat it for there the first day I was here. And soon enough saw what was the matter. Funny thing. As soon as the celebrities flock to a place the moneybags follow, and chase them away. Poor devils, the silver-spoon fraternity no sooner come into their pile than they discover how little there is that money will buy. I—I've discovered that myself," Sam added, with a sheepish little laugh.

"So the slide-rule has worked out?"

"It's made me nearly a million in royalties," he snapped. "And that's all I've got."

"Not exactly to be sneezed at, I'd say."

"Yes, it is! It's a pile of dollars, and nothing more."

"So it hasn't bought you what you want?"

"It came too late. What's the good of the feast when the dishes are all cold!"

"And the fling isn't—very giddy?"

"I'm—old."

"You're—only fine. You don't know how to be bad."

"Thanks. But it isn't that. I'm—skinny—and awful bald."

"Oh, shucks! Money buys the smiles from the booful babies."

"Quite right! You get your money's worth. Your money's worth of cold victuals. For as long as you pay. At least when you're my age. And are skinny—and awful bald . . . You ought to hear Marian's views on the subject!" he laughed, and not the boyish laugh.

"I was going to ask about Marian."

"And didn't dare? I don't blame you."

"She's—?"

"Hanged if I know. Or care. And neither do you."

I confess I assented—so far as to laugh.

"It was hell. No less. Now I'm free of it. I've got that much to be glad of!"

"Was the freedom dearly bought?"

"Dead easy. I did what I said I would. Gave her grounds for divorce.

Grounds she couldn't ignore. It got into the papers. I saw to that. But perhaps you never read the back page these days. Anyway you never saw a more thunderstruck body in your life. She'd threatened separation, or divorce—or promised it—for years; and when it came—!"

"I'll wager you were a bit dashed yourself. Eh, Sam!"

"Oh, the associations of years, you know— Funny! Even if they are hell they're not to be broken without something of a snap."

"Think of it! Homesick for hell!"

"Not on your life!"

"But this sort of thing doesn't—come off?"

"You needn't rub it in. It doesn't—come off for the likes of me. I'm a cheated man. You know the sad story of my life. Damn it, I've deserved better than this. Better than I got at any time. The only satisfaction left me is the hope and the belief that Marian's having it just as bad, or worse. Thank God, she's got hers! She's fat. Not stout. Fat! And be damned to her!"

I laughed. Nobody hates like that without being absurdly in love. The moors were reaching about us now, quite symbolical of Sam Agnew's history—absolutely without variety and shade. Some people find these horizontal lines, in life as in Nantucket, restful and quite to their taste. Some others find such even spaces what they are—a trifle flat.

For my part I agree with Sam Agnew. Queer thing it is, the luck that may fall to a man. Sam Agnew did deserve a vast deal more than he'd got out of life. Marian was one of those railroad presidents or ship-builders who chance to be born to skirts. She never lived; she ran things. Never shall I forget my first visit to their house.

It was on their first anniversary and Sam was taking home a trifling remembrance—one of those marvelous India scarfs, as ample as a sheet, as filmy as gossamer. It was of a dreamy pink, and you could have drawn it

through a finger-ring. The precious trifle cost as much in time as it cost in money, I very well recall. The Fifth Avenue shop where we picked it up was crowded to the doors, and we fought for half an hour before we got it. And Marian adored it—until she happened to glance at her husband's shoulder.

"Aha!" she cried, and flicked from his sleeve a pale blue thread. "A pinky pink one for me, and a baby-blue for the pretty stenographer, I see."

She held up the silky thread. "Look at that! There's the evidence."

"That?" Sam examined it in some mystification.

"You needn't pretend you never saw it before!"

"Oh, that I must have got on me at the shop. We had to fight our way to the counter."

"A likely story!" Marian jeered him.

Pretty she was, but the dark eyes widened and bulged slightly, the dimpled chin came forward and the hot temper I suspected was there the first time I met her appeared.

"A likely story, indeed! I'm going to investigate that, my young man."

"But it's quite true, my dear Marian," I tried to assist. "I was with him all the time, and I can vouch for him."

"Oh, you two would be sure to stick together!"

Then the verbal flat-irons began to fly, and I—I beat it.

III.

THAT may be scarcely a fair sample of Sam Agnew's wedded life, but he wasn't altogether happy in it. She often enough raised hob with him when he was at home; she always raged when the poor devil went out. It wasn't a bad income Sam was making from his engineering profession; but whatever it was, in Marian's eyes it never had been quite enough. Nothing but the paddle will do for women like that. Your Freudian psychologists have a nasty name for the habit in a woman of everlastingly picking on a man; but

I don't believe it in Marian's case. Such women abuse a love for the pleasure of seeing how much it will stand. However this isn't the place for Marian's portrait.

Sam got through it on the stimulant of hope. Always he had the prospect of success with his invention of a slide-rule to gild his future. According to the poets it is the women who live on hope. According to the facts it is the men.

Marian had nothing but ridicule for the great invention. She held its worthlessness was proved by its slow acceptance, whereas that proved its worth. Sam's rule was a miracle. It laid before the stupidest blacksmith a child's key to the whole mystery of minute mathematical measurement. But a miracle is not put over—I believe they call it that—like a soap or a safety-razor, and Sam was obliged to wait for public intelligence to catch up with him. He was also obliged to hope. While Marian jeered.

The jeering rather made Sam Agnew the more dogged in his hopes, but it also made him bitter.

"Very well!" he would say. "When it comes, I'll show you something. I'm going to have my fling before the daisies sprout over my head!"

"They'll be the only things that have sprouted from that bald pate!" Marian would jeer him the more candidly, and wished him his fill of his long-projected fling.

IV

Now he was having his fill of it. Faith has a wonderful way of gaining its point. It is a Columbus that always discovers its America. And nobody was so thunderstruck at a foolish world as Marian was when Sam Agnew discovered dhis. Nobody was so bored as Sam.

As we drove along the sandy road, 'Sconsetwards, he put out his dejected feet over the dash and exposed a length of his ankles.

"Look at 'em!" he complained. "It's

they are my tragedy. Look at the skinny things!"

"Good Lord, man! They're worth as much as your million. Nine men out of ten would give that much, if they had it, to own such ankles. You'd make another million if you told 'em how you did it."

"Then it must be my head. It looks like an ostrich egg." Sam lifted his hat and feelingly stroked it.

"But it has really wonderful tones. Any booful baby would cheerfully kiss it—for a million. That isn't your tragedy."

"Yes, it is! I was cheated in person before I began to be cheated in everything else. I'm cheated, I tell you. A cheated man."

"You're the victim of intelligence. You like a pair of pretty ankles, but they've got to be attached to a bunch of brains. It's a hopeless combination."

"Because—?"

"Ankles are for an afternoon. Brains are for a lifetime."

"In other words, the booful baby wants to be married?"

"You saw one that was. And you saw what she married. He was—fat. Not stout. Fat!" I quoted.

"And married! No, thank you. Once was enough."

"What then?"

"This, I suppose." Sam drew from a pocket a wicked little black automatic.

I laughed.

"Oh, of course I won't," Sam growled. "I didn't, at least. The place is over here on the sand. I'll show it you—the historic spot!"

V

WE tied up our nag in the little settlement, and slid down the beach, filling our shces with a sandy souvenir of the place as we did so. For a moment Sam paused to admire a pair of handsome women whom he positively identified, in some excitement, as ornaments of a Broadway show. The sight of

them almost reconciled him to life. And in truth they did make a pretty picture, flashing through the water with the frisky ease of a porpoise, excellent matrons that they were—from Springfield, if I remember rightly, though there's nothing certain about an introduction in a bathing-cap. I stifled a yawn while Samuel raved, and then we strolled on toward Sankaty Light.

A little way up the now lonely sands, Sam halted.

"Sit down," he commanded, and we did so.

"It was here," he said on. "I tried it the other day. But it was too ridiculous. I made the mistake of mooning out over that expanse yonder."

He pointed to a pearly sea and a cloudless sky. "And the age of it all came over me. And the long time yet that all that's going to be here. In the presence of all that, what would my disappearance amount to? The pop of a toy pistol. That's all. It was belittling. It was insulting. It was absurd. Damned if I'd do it!"

"And so—?"

Sam Agnew startled me, first with a brief but actual outburst of tears, and then with a prolonged fit of laughter.

"The devil of it is," he said brokenly, when he could control himself, "I'm headed straight as a die for something a thousand times more belittling and insulting and absurd. I can feel it coming. And Lord, how I hate that woman!"

"Yes, I know," I agreed. As if a man took the trouble to hate what he doesn't love.

"But I can feel the tug back to her. I've fought it and fought it, but it's got me. You're right, of course. It isn't that I'm freakishly skinny, and bald as an egg. That's not my tragedy, or not all of it. For a long time I couldn't figure it out. Now I've seen it at last! You know?"

He laid a trembling hand on my arm. "There's something frightful about—about marriage. It's awful. It took me a long time to understand. Now it's come over me. Marriage is"—he

sank his voice—"a habit. It has all the remorseless tyranny of a habit. It's like a rubber band on you, forever pulling you back. I've stretched it—stretched it till I was sure it would snap. But the infernal thing never snaps. There's the hell of it. Why, six months ago I saw her, in a cabaret, with a man."

"With 'another'?" I marveled.

But he missed the irony.

"With the cheapest-looking skate you ever saw! And I give you my word—You know yourself how nasty she's been to me; how she's 'stuck it into me' all these years?" he put in parenthetically. "Yet I give you my word, when I saw that fellow, I nearly dropped dead at finding myself so hot and indignant!"

I believed him. His indignation was still in his words.

"Well, there it is! Once get yourself inside that rubber band, and you're"—he gulped—"you're gone. Have you ever seen two horses rubbing noses in the corner of a pasture?" he broke off.

"I have," said I, doing my best to follow his thought.

"That's marriage! These horses may kick and bite each other in the traces, but if one of them is sold away from the other he dies. That's marriage."

"It's human relationship, in general," said I. "Often I've been lonely enough to miss—"

Sam Agnew ignored the remark. "Of course I know—you know—just what she'll say." His heart was now far, very far away from me. "She'll take every advantage of the situation. She'll rub it in for all she's worth. It will be worse than before. Worse than death. But I can see it coming. I can see it coming, like a man in the current above Niagara!"

With that I lost patience with Sam Agnew.

"Oh, blow a trombone in her ear!" said I, "and let her know Sam Agnew is alive! Don't you see where you are? You can bet your life she's as jealous as you. She must be utterly lost without you to scold. There's all the paddle you need. Besides, your fame. Don't you know that everybody here

has heard who **you** are? I'll wager
Matie herself has heard by now. And
is jealous of that, too. Well! Do you
know what a paddle is for?"

"Home, James," said Samuel,
rising.

* * *

I couldn't quite see the rubber band
about both their necks, but there they
were together, on the landing, when I
returned. . . . And they were beastly
romantic.



DO NOT BELIEVE ME

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

DO not believe me when I say I love you—
Surely you have forgotten that we are
No more than grains of dust caught up and mingled
With the white flame of some invisible star!

Do not believe me when I say your beauty
Is like the twilight, or the hills at dawn—
These are not words of mine: they have been uttered
Across the seas by lovers dead and gone.

Do not believe me when I kiss your eyelids,
And cry the world is smaller than your breast. . . .
Lo! we must go and leave them in the moonlight—
Two, whose unprompted lips will know the rest!

Do not believe me when I say I love you—
The stars have spoken, dear; and it is they
Desire again the dust of us, so nearly
Forgot beneath the moon, and swept away.



THE combination of two extremes of emotion gives a woman supreme
happiness—her lover's passionate ardour and her rival's jealous hate.



GREAT love comes only to that heart where it was long denied.



EVERY old maid has a sweetheart who died.



THE ACID TEST

By Dennison Varr

THEY called him a Chesterfield.

He carried pretty women across muddy streets.

He was stooped from his habitual bowing.

He once dived into a fountain in his evening clothes to rescue a lady's glove.

He always took off his hat in an elevator.

He surrendered his advantageous position at a military parade to a poor old woman.

Yet he grunted horribly when he had to get up to let the fat woman out during the *entr'acte*.



FOREBODING

By Hortense Flexner

THE old dim sorrow of dead worlds
Is on the street today,
Far wrongs and yielding, unshed tears,
Yearning, the wreckage of gray years,
Live in my heart with bleak, vague fears,
I have no words to say.

The evil conscience of the earth
Is darkly haunting me,
The winds of sorrow rise and blow
Out of a thousand years ago,
Why should I be afraid to know
What things my eyes may see?



A WOMAN will bear much neglect from a man who loves violently.

STATISTICS

By Vincent Starrett

EIGHTEEN steps led tortuously upward to John Edwards' apartment. Edwards was sure of this, because he had counted them one evening just as a matter of whim. There were exactly eighteen, and so he told his wife when he reached the top, where, rather truculently, she awaited him.

"Eighteen *what?*" she had exclaimed.

"Steps," said John. He pronounced it "shsteps."

"You're in liquor again," said his wife. "Nasty little beast!"

"M' dear," protested John Edwards thickly, "I 'shure you—"

"Bah!" sneered the wife. "Go to bed, you disgusting little rat! *Eighteen steps!*"

John Edwards was perfectly right, however, in his count. There *were* eighteen steps. Had Mrs. Edwards, squiffy or sober, taken the trouble to count them, she could have reached no more accurate total herself. On the mere evidence of John's statistics there could be no ground for charging him with being maltd.

There were, however, other indications of this condition for, in point of fact, John Edwards was drunk. He might have argued that Dr. Johnson, according to legend, counted pickets in the fences he passed without gaining a reputation for inebriety; but argument was not his strong suit, nor, for that matter, had he ever heard of Dr. Johnson. In any case, it would have made no difference with Mrs. Edwards.

The novelty of knowing the exact number of steps in his flight appealed subtly to John Edwards. He did not immediately forget the knowledge that had come to him. As motorman on the

neighboring electric road, there were other statistics known to him in the line of his business. He knew, for instance, the number of miles he journeyed on his car in an average day's run, the number of passengers likely to be accommodated on a given day, and certain minor mathematical formulæ concerning his motor. These, however, were matters of daily routine; he never thought of talking about them. They were things he was paid to know and were, in consequence, matters of colossal unimportance off duty.

In the barroom at the end of the carline where John Edwards drank bad liquor at the close of the day's work, other street-car men gathered. Some of the men became very drunk upon occasion, among them John Edwards. His favorite conductor, McCaffrey, became drunk less frequently than most; for one reason, because his training had been the other way, and for another because he could not drink much without becoming ill. He was a mild individual who rarely participated in the discussions that often made the night hideous in Colombo's bar. In a furtive, apologetic way, he kept a friendly eye on John Edwards.

II

On an evening not long after Edwards' momentous discovery relative to his stairway, McCaffrey made an unfortunate remark. A particularly noisy crowd was congregated at the bar when he made it. John Edwards had been buying.

"I was so late this mornin'," said McCaffrey, harping on duty, "that I near

fell down the whole set of steps, leavin' the house."

"Fell *up* the steps, yeh mean, don't yeh?" jeered a mountainous person at his side. "Listen to what lives in a basement, tellin' us it fell downstairs gettin' to work!"

"A man c'n drown in three inches o' water," retorted McCaffrey, who had read this fact in a Sunday supplement, and, consequently, was sure of his ground. "And I guess a man c'n break his neck fallin' down three stairs."

"*You'll* break yer neck lookin' back at the ladies yeh pass," contributed a third; which was considered fair wit.

"There's eighteen steps to my flat," spoke up John Edwards, opportunity having been given him to disclose the secret.

He stated the fact for what it was worth, without undue pomposity.

"Where do *you* live, John?" asked a newcomer in the conversation. "In a garret?"

"The d-deuce there is!" said the mountainous one, and thrust out his jaw. This extraordinary movement gave his face the appearance of that of a heavily undershot bulldog. "Edwards is jes' takin' credit fer his steps, like he does fer everything else."

"The d-deuce there *ain't*!" retorted Edwards, flushing.

He knew it made no difference whether there were eighteen or forty-eight, but his word had been questioned and the jibe was part of a long-standing vendetta. "I ain't a liar, Fogarty, and I said *eighteen*."

"Call me a liar and I'll lam the block off yeh!" declared the large Fogarty, who, of course, had *not* been called a liar.

"What's the difference?" feebly solicited McCaffrey. He wished he had forgotten to mention his own unfortunate tumble. He scented trouble.

"No man can call me a liar," exploded Fogarty. "*That's* the difference!"

"I can," furiously responded John Edwards, and tossed three fingers of courage into the rest of the fluid already consumed. "If yeh say there ain't *eighteen* steps to my flat, yer a liar!"

A moment later John Edwards was lying quite still and dead on the floor, having yielded not at all in what he knew to be a fact beyond dispute. Fogarty, white and shaking, stood over him. His huge jaw had fallen ludicrously, and fear shone in his eyes. The hand that clutched the controller which had slain John Edwards hung limply at his side. . . .

"I didn't mean to kill him," he whispered. "My God, I didn't mean to kill him! They can't hang me. . . ."

III

McCAFFREY, sweating and toiling down the tortuous flight at the northwest corner of John Edwards' coffin, found himself mechanically counting the steps.

There were just eighteen.



IF you would have the last word with a woman, keep her mouth full of kisses.



THE RESULTANT

By Allan Murray Gale

MRS. CARRINGTON, after the way of many drivers, had taken the hill on high, at top speed, and having reached the crest, now shut off the power preparatory to coasting down through Apple Tree Lane to the main highway.

Apple Tree Lane is of good width for a lane, a large car does not fill it entirely, there is still left space for the passage of foot travelers on either side, but the space, while sufficient, is not great.

As Mrs. Carrington came down the hill, a rather small boy turned from the main road into the lane and began the ascent.

To the lady who had been running at the rate of thirty miles an hour it seemed that her car was now moving with almost ludicrous slowness; to the boy toiling upward it may well have seemed that the car was running down upon him with alarming swiftness.

Whether the boy walking on the left-hand side of the road thought that there was more room on the other side, or suddenly remembered the signs which he had lately seen upon the main road, reading "Keep to the right," will never be known. Whatever the reason, he attempted to cross in front of the car. Mrs. Carrington tugged frantically at the emergency brake but the boy went down, there was a jolt and—when the hospital three miles distant was reached, the surgeon pronounced the child dead.

Mrs. Carrington did not make the impression upon her neighbors of being a sensitive woman. Carrington was one of the rich men of Heathcliff, but neither he nor Mrs. Carrington had

been born to riches. There were things in their early life that had made difficult to Mrs. Carrington the attainment of the social position which beyond question she now held. Victory as she had gained could hardly have been won by a sensitive woman.

Yet she was unnerved by the happenings of the afternoon to such an extent that she employed a chauffeur from a nearby garage to drive her home, and having arrived there went straight to bed, directing her maid to telephone for her physician and the rector.

II

The ringing of the telephone caught James Wood, M.D., at a moment of leisure. As a matter of fact, moments of leisure with Doctor Wood were more frequent than desired. He had been smiling rather perfunctorily over a not recent number of *Punch*, but as he took up the receiver his face automatically took on a professional expression.

"Yes, this is Doctor Wood," he said.

"Indeed, most distressing. Please say to Mrs. Carrington that I will come immediately."

The Doctor replaced the receiver and dashed up the stairs two steps at a time, calling—

"Elsie! Elsie!"

"What is it?" answered his wife. "I'm in the back room dressing."

"A call from Mrs. Carrington," cried the Doctor. "Do you understand? Mrs. Henry Carrington."

"Oh goodie! goodie!" exclaimed Elsie appearing hastily from the inner

room in partial disarray. "What is it?"

"Nervous collapse, I gather from what the maid said," her husband answered, struggling out of one coat and into another. "She ran over a boy, the girl said—Apple Tree Lane—killed him, I understand."

"How dreadful for her!" said Elsie. "Hadn't you better change your collar, dear?"

"No, no," the doctor replied, "clean this morning. Yes, of course, dreadful for her. If I can only get in there regularly, Elsie."

"Oh, I hope you will, dear; I know you will, Jim," she answered, kissing him.

III

IN the Rectory study, it was not until the shrill summons had been thrice repeated that the Reverend Mr. Stevens laid aside his pen, and murmuring, "Tut, tut," answered the call.

"Yes," he said in full round tones, "this is the Rectory. It is the Rector speaking."

"Oh, how unfortunate; how very distressing!"

"Oh, surely, surely. I will come at the earliest possible moment. Will you tell Mrs. Carrington, please, at the earliest possible moment."

"No, no; I am sure not. Convey to Mrs. Carrington my heartfelt sympathy. It must have been a very terrible shock, but she should not give away; she must not give way."

The Rector did not climb the stairs two steps at a time; he was no longer a young man, and was of a comfortably rotund figure. The Rector was content to take one step at a time, and to take it decorously as became his cloth.

"Sarah, my dear," he said, on reaching his wife, "I have just had a telephone from Mrs. Henry Carrington's house."

Mrs. Stevens looked up from her sewing.

"It seems," the Rector continued,

"that she has met with a very distressing accident, quite unavoidable, of course, but naturally distressing. They wish me to call and I shall go at once."

"She is not seriously hurt, I hope," said Mrs. Stevens.

"No, oh no, not at all, physically; she suffers from the shock. She has run over a boy with fatal results. She really has no reason for blaming herself. She was not speeding. It was in Apple Tree Lane which is rather narrow, you know, for a large car, though there is really room enough. But the child became frightened or confused; it is most regrettable."

"Whose child is it?" asked his wife.

"The name is Brown, I think; they live across the track—not parishioners, of course."

"It is dreadful for Mrs. Carrington, of course," Mrs. Stevens commented, "but why does she send for you? She never struck me as a woman of—of—that kind, John."

"Well, my dear, I am glad she feels that she can turn to me in time of trouble, and it is surely both my inclination and duty to respond. I shall have to make some changes in my attire."

Mrs. Stevens put aside her sewing and after the way of many good wives, became her husband's valet.

"There," she said, surveying him critically, "You will do now, I think."

"Yes," he replied, absently glancing at himself in the mirror, "it seems quite all right. I have been thinking about the meeting. I shall telephone, putting it off."

"Oh John, I wouldn't do that—it's not till evening," his wife exclaimed. "I know it bores you, but it is better to go through with it and have it over."

"My dear Sarah," remonstrated the rector, "I am surprised at you. One is, I think, justified at times in avoiding a disagreeable thing when there is no less in dignity or harm to others involved in doing so; but I am not postponing this meeting unnecessarily, because it bores me, as you put it. It will be well on towards the dinner

hour, probably, before I have finished with Mrs. Carrington, and as Mrs. Carrington will be dining alone, why it seems likely, you know, that I may be asked to remain to dinner."

"But you could excuse yourself, afterwards, and really John, I think it would be wise. Cordelia will be put out, and you know she does not hesitate to say very disagreeable things when she is angry," Mrs. Stevens urged.

"My dear," the Rector returned, "much as I admire and esteem Miss Bunting, I cannot but think that it would be better for us all if she were, shall I say, a little less dictatorial. She is most liberal in her contributions, and most energetic and efficient in carrying on the church work. But, my dear, she is not the Rector, and the vestry, and, ah—the whole congregation, in one."

"Why John!" his wife exclaimed, "you know——"

But the Rector interrupted her.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I know, if she were too deeply offended and we lost her support, we should be in a bad way, and that rather ties my hands. That is why I think it so important to enlist the active interest of some other really strong personality—such as Mr. Carrington. He is a busy man and hard to approach, but I have long thought that when a fitting opportunity offered I could put it before him in a convincing way. The opportunity may come to-night, and I feel that I must be free to take advantage of it."

"I suppose you are right," Mrs. Stevens answered thoughtfully, "but I am sorry to have anything interfere with this particular meeting. Polly Carter didn't offer her house, you know. Cordelia fairly forced it upon her. I know that Polly hasn't a maid—she left last week. Men do not realize what that means, especially to a girl as busy as Polly—she has to make preparations for the meeting, you know."

"I have been very firm about that, my dear," the Rector answered. "I

have insisted most strongly that the refreshments must be kept simple. These are strictly business meetings—the social side must not be made prominent."

"Simple," exclaimed Mrs. Stevens, "of course they are simple—coffee, tea, chocolate, sandwiches and cake—but do you imagine those simple things make and serve themselves in sufficient quantities for twenty or thirty people? And don't you realize that there is such a thing as quality and that apparently simple things may be works of art."

"I yield to no one, my dear Sarah, in my appreciation of the quality of Polly's delicious sandwiches, cake and"—with a reminiscent pause—"her superb coffee," said the Rector. "I shall telephone her at once; we will hope that she has not yet begun her preparations."

IV

POLLY CARTER, being a methodical young woman, had arranged all the ingredients for a cake before her, and with sleeves rolled up stood for a moment in contemplation. Then she turned towards the closed door with slightly inclined head.

"There," she said, "I knew it. Of course I hear it even with both doors shut, and I shan't have a moment's peace of mind if I don't answer it. I wish it had never been invented!" Polly left the kitchen and presently her voice floated down from the floor above.

"Hello! Yes, Oh! Good afternoon, Mr. Stevens. Oh how perfectly awful. She would be, of course; such a terrible shock—it is quite enough to unnerve anyone. Oh, yes! Why—yes, I will notify the others. Not at all, not at all, Mr. Stevens. I understand perfectly; you mustn't keep her waiting. I don't mind in the least—it is no trouble at all. Good-bye."

Polly hung up the receiver, and fairly danced through the adjoining rooms to the back of the house, where from behind a closed door came the sound of a racing typewriter.

"Louise, Louise!" she called, rattling the door knob.

"Go away! Go away! I will not be disturbed," came a voice from within.

But Polly only shook the harder and continued to call until the key clicked in the lock, and swinging the door open, her irate sister confronted her.

"Mary Randolph Carter!" sternly said the figure in the doorway. "If you don't go away, I'll kill you. These lists must be delivered to Mrs. Vernon by ten o'clock to-morrow. If they are not, she'll have a fit. I've got to work like mad to do it. I haven't time to talk—go away."

"Calm yourself, sister mine, calm yourself," Molly replied. "It's all right. I can help you in a few minutes. Rejoice! the meeting has been postponed."

"That's fine! You can read these awful Russian and Polish names to me; they are driving me insane. Why did they put it off?"

Polly's bright face grew solemn.

"It is really very dreadful," she began, and then told her sister the story of the accident.

"What an awful thing to happen to anyone. I don't see why, though, Mr. Stevens should put off the meeting," said Louise.

"Why neither do I, but I'm much too thankful to be critical. I'll leave that for Cordelia. My, won't she be hopping!" Polly answered.

Cordelia was "hopping," and did not hesitate to say so.

"It's absolutely preposterous," she declared. "A wretched excuse. The idea! Of course the woman was upset—any woman would be. It was proper for him to go, but there was absolutely no reason for spending the whole evening there and putting off an important duty to do it. A mere paltry excuse, I call it, and I shall tell him so."

V

"Well, old girl," said Henry Carrington, "I guess you're feeling a good deal better. You'll be all right after a good night's sleep."

"Oh, yes, I'll sleep. Doctor Woods was very sympathetic and seemed to understand just what I needed. I think I shall have him after this for the children. And the Rector quite set my mind at rest; he made me feel that we mustn't question or reason too much, even if we don't understand we can rest assured that whatever comes to us, it is in some way for our good," she answered.

"Stevens is more of a man than I supposed," was her husband's comment. "He talked very well; he seems to be up against a rather hard proposition in some ways. I guess I'll have to pitch in and help him out. Well, good night, don't worry, and sleep well," he added.

"The worst of it was, that I was afraid people would say that I was careless, but the Rector says Matthews, his sexton, saw the whole thing and he will see that the truth is made plain," and Mrs. Carrington composed herself to sleep.

VI

"Yes," said Doctor Woods, snapping off the electric light. "I know that I impressed her favorably. She as good as told me that I should have charge of the children. It's the turning of the tide, dear. I think we can risk getting a car now."

VII

"My dear Sarah," the Rector concluded, "you may sleep in peace and not worry over Cordelia's unreasonable irritation. Now that Carrington will hold up my hands there will be, ah, many changes in the conduct of parish affairs."

VIII

"THERE," said Louise Carter, closing her typewriter, "I call that a good job well done, I shouldn't have finished it before daylight if you hadn't been able to help, Polly. My, but I'm tired, I shall sleep the sleep of the just this night!"

"Me too!" said Polly.

MARIE-MADELEINE

By Charles Dornier

LE mécanicien Jean Maillard avait donné ce nom à la grue amarrée au long du quai du Louvre, et à bord de laquelle il vivait les deux tiers de l'an. Elle profilait contre les hauts murs, au-dessus de son ponton verdi et de sa chambre de chauffe en rôle blanche, un cou vigoureux et svelte armé d'un bec aigu d'acier qui, plongeant, allait crocher au fond des lourdes péniches les bennes chargées de grès, de meulières, de briques, de charbon ou de sable.

Depuis que Marie, sa femme, une payse remanée de la Comté lointaine, l'avait quitté un jour, ne lui laissant qu'une blonde fillette, Madeleine, laquelle à son tour s'était laissée séduire aux beèles moustaches et aux galants propos de Victorin Montagnac, un Méridional hâbleur, grand orateur de meetings et monteur de grèves, il reportait toute sa tendresse douloureuse sur sa machine, qui, elle, ne l'avait jamais trompé, docile et fidèle, marchant "au doigt et à l'œil", et, d'une simple pression sur un levier, tout le jour tournait, se baissait pour happer et enlever les charges.

Il l'avait baptisée des prénoms réunis des deux traîtresses. Aussi, de quels soins touchants il l'entourait à tout heure, ménageant ses forces, graissant méticuleusement ses rouages, entourant son mécanisme délicat de toiles et de flanelles pendant les nuits brumeuses du fleuve, pour la préserver des rouilles, qui sont les tuberculoses des machines.

Il était maître à son bord comme un capitaine sur sa dunette, et, du matin au soir, il dominait sur le fleuve, rue mouvante que sillonnent les mouches

affairées et sifflantes, les chalands en chapelets que traîne le beuglement lugubre des remorqueurs. De chaque côté, les parapets des quais montaient presque au niveau des toits, semblables à de gigantesques balcons où se penchent, changeants spectateurs, le peuple menu des badauds.

Au couchant, les dents des ponts sciaient le flot, laissant voir entre les arches Passy, bleuâtre dans l'éloignement, couvrant sa colline d'une éboulement de maisons serrées.

Au levant, d'autres ponts de leurs chaînons de pierre amarraient aux deux bords le haut vaisseau de la Cité, tout hérissé de tourelles, et pointant vers le ciel les plus mâts des flèches de Notre-Dame et de la Sainte-Chapelle.

La nuit, quand rien ne vivait plus sur la Seine, vers le Pont-Neuf, que la plainte houleuse et la ligne écumante du barrage, il se plaisait à admirer les rives d'ombre pointillées par les becs de gaz réguliers, le ciel criblé d'étoiles confuses, et les feux rouges des fanaux qui, reflétés sous les arches, se prolongeaient dans l'eau en stalactites tremblantes et féeriques.

Or, voilà qu'un matin, comme il était à son poste, sa grue sous pression, toute prête à la manœuvre, il vit arriver sur les quais, autour des docks et des chantiers, une troupe de sergents de ville encadrant le groupe réduit des travailleurs.

Depuis quelques jours, les ouvriers du bâtiment s'étaient mis en grève, et ils avaient l'intention, paraît-il, d'empêcher les débardeurs des quais, paresseux à suivre le mouvement, de décharger les bateaux de moellons au compte des entrepreneurs.

Donc, sous la protection des agents, le travail commença, mais les débardeurs, vaguement inquiets et comme dépayés en ce silence des quais et derrière cette haie policière, avaient peu de cœur à l'ouvrage. Soudain, vers huit heures, déboulant des grands escaliers, rompant d'un choc le barrage des policiers trop peu nombreux, les grévistes, à grandes clameurs, envahirent le chantier. Ils étaient conduits par un énergumène à longue barbe noire que soulignait une énorme cravate rouge, et Jean Maillard reconnut en lui l'ennemi, Victorin Montagnac, meneur de grèves et voleur de filles.

Du coup, il arrêta le mouvement de sa grue prête à enlever sa benne chargée de pierres, et, dévoré de rage, contempla le furieux spectacle. Les injures, puis les coups, s'échangeaient déjà entre les deux troupes, mais bientôt celle des grévistes, plus nombreuse, mieux dirigée, plus ardente, l'emporta. Les débardeurs, s'essaimant derrière les tas de sable, les baraquements, s'échappèrent en grande hâte par les rampes des quais.

Alors Victorin Montagnac, la voix triomphante et le geste haut : "Bravo, camarades ! Les renards n'ont pas tenu longtemps devant vous ! Vous leur avez fichu une de ces frousses qui comptera ! Maintenant, il vous reste à me bazarder ces vieux sabots et cette sale ferraille patronale ; allons-y et en cinq sec !" Et il désignait au sabotage des grévistes les bateaux de meulières, les leviers, les brouettes, et à cinq brasses du bord, les narguant de sa

fumée paisiblement crachée, la grue au crops écaillé de boulons, Marie-Madeleine. Avec des applaudissements et des rires, la bande aussitôt se mit à l'œuvre, les uns s'efforçant de couper ou de briser les cordes, les chaînes, et les mâts d'amarrage, les autres à coups de moellons visant la chambre à vapeur, où le mécanicien, comme un guerrier dans sa tourelle cuirassée, attendait.

Quand la première pierre fit gémir les tôles de sa cabine, Jean poussa un rugissement furieux comme si on l'avait touché lui-même en plein cœur. Ainsi, set homme se trouverait toujours sur son chemin pour lui faire du mal ! Non content de lui avoir volé jadis sa fille, son bonheur, voilà qu'aujourd'hui il venait l'assiéger jusqu'en son dernier refuge, à ce poste d'honneur qui lui était devenu plus cher qu'un foyer, plus sacré qu'un sanctuaire.

Il gronda sourdement des injures, puis, tout haut, il annonça : "Oui, mais je saurai me défendre et le faire, d'un seul coup, tout payer !"

Et la main sur sa manette, redevenu soudain calme, attentif, comme à son travail, il remit en marche sa grue. Le long cou d'acier se redressa, enlevant la benne lourde d'énormes moellons. Brusque, elle tourna du côté du quai, droit sur le groupe où gesticulait le meneur. Un déclic bref, et la charge, en bruit de tonnerre, s'écrouta sur eux, et, dans la fuite éperdue de tous, il n'y eut plus, sur le pavé, parmi les corps écrasés, que la cravate de Montagnac, dont la tache, plus rouge peu à peu, au soleil ruisselant, s'élargissait...



ANTE la pueria del rezador, nunca echas tu trigo al sol.



La mujer y el vidrio siempre están en peligro.



BIRNAM WOOD IN DUNSINANE

By George Jean Nathan

DESPITE the not uncommon assumption that approximately all that is necessary to the adaptation of a Continental play is to set the second-act clock back six hours, take out the bedstead and cast Mr. Jack Barrymore for the husband instead of the lover, it is reversely true that this business of adaptation calls for the very highest playwrighting sagacity and talent. And it is equally true, by reason of this, that not more than one such adaptation in every twenty-five is worth a hoot; and true, further, that what holds of American-made adaptations holds equally of the attempts at adaptation made by the English, the Germans, the Austrians, and the French.

It is, with reservations, almost as difficult to translate a play from one language into another, and from the viewpoint of one people into that of another, and from the favour of one nation into the prejudice of another nation, as it is to write the play in the first place. A careful scrutiny of the statistics of the world's theater for the last ten years discovers astonishingly few adaptations that, whether from the artistic or even the commercial orthodoxy, have been fully successful. And the figures seem all the more surprising when one observes the very large proportion of failure in the matter of the adaptation of plays which even in their original form would appear to have been automatically pre-adapted, and easily to have been made ready for an alien audience by a mere scratch or two of the pen. As, for example, Margaret Mayo's "Baby Mine," intrinsically a farce to the French taste, which even the adroit Maurice Hennequin foozled in French adaptation—and, for further example,

Eugene Walter's "Paid in Full," intrinsically a comedy-drama to the German taste, (*vide* Rudolf Lothar's "I Love You"), which even the equally adroit Schmieden funkled in German adaptation.

There is surely something more than mere theater chance behind the fact that ten more or less celebrated Continental plays failed in quick succession in their adapted form when brought to the American stage, several years ago, by the late Charles Frohman. For all Mr. Belasco's exceptional astuteness as a showman, the "Fable of the Wolf" ("The Phantom Rival") and "The Lily" baffled his most shrewdly selected translators. In France, Synge's "Playboy" (adapted by Maurice Bourgeois for the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in the Antoine), Wedekind's "Awakening of Spring" (adapted by Robert d'Humières), Moody's "Great Divide" (adapted by the Cazamians), Sheridan's "School for Scandal" (adapted by Henri Oudine and Georges Bazile), Pinero's "House in Order" (adapted by Bazalgette and Bienstock), to say nothing of Shaw's "You Never Can Tell" and "Mrs. Warren," Hebbel's "Marie Madeleine," José Godina's "In the Gardens of Murcie," Wilde's "Lady Windermere" and scores of other such interesting plays, have regularly gone astray. In Germany and Austria, this has been equally true in the case of innumerable plays like Gorki's "The Last," Barrie's "What Every Woman Knows," Stephen Phillips' "Paola and Francesca," C. M. S. MacLellan's "Leah Kleschna," Pinero's "House in Order," Shaw's "Androcles," and Haddon Chambers' "Passers-By." And true, as well, has the situation been in England with a vast

number of plays by the better known among alien dramatists—plays such as "The Happy Island" (adapted by James Bernard Fagan from Lengyel), "The Right to Kill" (adapted by Gilbert Canman from Pierre Frondaie), "The Turning Point" (adapted by Peter le Marchant from Kistemaeckers), "The Bread of Others" (by J. N. Duddington from Turgenev), "The Head of the Firm" (by Leslie Faber from Bergström)—the plays, beyond and above these, of Hauptmann, Schnitzler, Guimera, Molnar, Guitry, Björnson, Sudermann, Di Giacomo, Strindberg, et al.

When an adapted play fails, whether in this country or in England or on the Continent, it is the habitual critical pastime to lay blame for the demise not upon the adaptation, but upon the original play: the blame usually taking flower in the theory that the theme and development of the original are alien to the philosophy, taste and whim of the national audience immediately concerned. In the majority of cases, this is, of course, a mere braying and wiggling of ears. When a respectable piece of dramatic writing fails in adaptation, the philosophy, taste and whim of the alien audience are very often less at fault than the philosophy, taste and whim of the adaptor. For example, the failure in America of the Hungarian Imre Földes' "Hallo," adapted by Mr. George Broadhurst as "Over the 'Phone," and without exception laid by the critics to the difference in moral attitude on the part of Viennese and American audiences, was actually due not to the difference in moral attitude on the part of Viennese and American audiences but to the difference in moral attitude on the part of the original author of the play and the adaptor. How in God's name the difference in sex moral attitude 'twixt the European and American audiences could be brought forward as an argument to account for the local failure of the play when the adaptor by deleting the adultery motif and substituting therefor a kiss motif had completely removed any preliminary ground for this difference in sex moral

attitude, is pretty hard to understand. The failure of the play was due, not to the fact that an American audience is unsympathetic to gay adultery, but, very simply, to the fact that the adaptor believed an American audience was unsympathetic to gay adultery. The effect and the result were precisely the effect and the result that would automatically be achieved were "Peg o' My Heart" to be adapted for French audiences by, say, Pierre Veber and Maurice Rémon and were the MM. Veber and Rémon to think to enchant their Gallic public by deleting the artless innocence of the heroine and making her, instead, a *fille de joie*.

Apart from this adjudging the failure of adaptations in terms of the box-office, we observe an even more striking failure in terms of artistic and intelligent enterprise. Bernstein's "The Thief," for example, though it achieved a considerable commercial success in its American adaptation, was in this local reincarnation little more than a senseless yell *potage*. The entire meaning and intent of the play—the strychnia of lingerie, to wit—was slashed out of the text by the adaptor, with the result that what remained was nothing but a ten-cent detective story culminating in a noisy Laura Jean Libby love scene.

If Mr. Granville Barker were entrusted with the job of bringing Albrecht Dürer's painting of the "Adoration of the Trinity" to London from Vienna, it is reasonable to suppose that he would exercise the greatest care in transit to see that no nicks got into it. But when Mr. Granville Barker is entrusted with the job of bringing Arthur Schnitzler's word painting of "Anatol" to London from Vienna, what does he do? He does exactly what nine-tenths of the adaptors do when a work of art is given into their care. He nicks it up with his own petty morals and petty prejudices until little more remains of the original than the frame. Thus also does an American adaptor like Mr. Leo Ditrichstein—even though he is one of the best—slash to pieces Molnar's "Fable of the Wolf," does an English

adaptor like Mr. Cosmo Gordon Lennox slaughter de Caillavet and de Flers' "L'Ane de Buridan" to make a Frohman holiday and one like Mr. Arthur Burchier mutilate Lavedan's "Duel" beyond recognition, do French adaptors like the MM. Germain and Trébor scuttle the German Robert Reiner's "War" and a German adaptor like Rudolf Presber the French Hennequin and Bilhaud's "Best of Wives."

The trouble with the majority of adaptors, wherever one finds them, is a very simple trouble: they imagine that adaptation consists primarily in adapting an alien play to the different taste of a local audience, where, in reality, adaptation should consist rather in adapting the different taste of a local audience to the alien play.

Take, for instance, a French farce-comedy like "Le Rubicon." To adapt this diverting play in such wise that it would not colour the cheek of an Anglo-Saxon audience would be utterly to ruin it. There would be nothing left of it—and it would unquestionably fail with the first or second performance. But to adapt the Anglo-Saxon audience to "Le Rubicon" by some such device, say, as having a squad of supers in policemen's uniforms rush down the aisle at the final curtain and, after a denunciatory speech by the jackass captain, pretend to raid the theater on the ground that the play was immoral and not fit for an Anglo-Saxon audience, would be to preserve the play and probably pack the streets with ticket-boasting Blumbergs, Rosenblatts and Cohens. By such a process, the prejudice of a local audience might be simply adapted to the alien play—and all ends aptly served. For what we thus should have would be, obviously, the audience brought into impact with the play rather than, as is general, the play brought into impact with the audience. What such an alien audience demands is not, as the adaptors seem to think, that the characters in the play shall not condone things which to the alien audience are base and immoral, but, to the contrary, that *it* (the alien audience) shall not condone

or seem to condone those things. This is the point the adaptor more often than not confuses, or overlooks entirely.

The first-rate translations and adaptations of foreign plays by American playwrights may be numbered on the fingers of the hands—and at that enough fingers will remain to lift a chalice of beer very comfortably. While possibly not attaining to the eminence of one of these fingers, an American adaptation yet head and neck above the great majority is that made of Karl Slaboda's "At the Tea-table," by Mr. Roi Cooper Megrue. This Mr. Megrue has, in truth, negotiated a surprisingly apt and pretty job—and one which, in view of his recent brickyard adaptation of Kistemaekers' "A Night at the Front," is not, indeed, without its projection of the mood of astonishment. For the translator has in this instance not only preserved the intrinsic flavour of the original: he has actually injected a flavour into the original that the original did not possess. The result is a thoroughly engaging Americanization of a Central European essay on philandering of the Germano-Austro-Hungarian school of Lothar Schmidt and "Only a Dream," George Prinz and "He Can't Always Say No," Von Schmitz and "Don Juanito," Frank and Geyer and "A Charming Person," and the Földes already referred to. In addition to the skill and polite reserve with which Mr. Megrue has interwoven his own humour with the metaphysic of the original author, there is exhibited by him a very rare tact and adroitness in the jockeying and preserving of the savour of such elements in the play as in the hands of native adaptors are customarily squeezed dry of all juice, and—what is more—of all sense. "Tea for Three," Mr. Megrue calls his version; and it is to be whole-heartedly commended to all who admire quick-witted, smart comedy dealing with men and women somewhat more cosmopolitan and civilized than the usual Broadway stage-play brand of men whose cosmopolitanism would seem to rest mostly in an overcoat from Burberry's and

women whose civilization is reflected primarily by a very glossy nail polish. The third act of the play seems a trifle flat after the two excellent preceding acts; but for all that the evening is a sterling credit to an American adaptor and to the firm of the Selwyns who loosened the bankroll. Of the presenting company Miss Margaret Lawrence and Mr. Arthur Byron are admirably placed.

II

THE adaptation by the British Mr. Seymour Hicks of Sacha Guitry's "Faisons Un Rêve" under the title of "Sleeping Partners" brings to the American stage a farce comedy not less engaging than "Tea for Three." Dealing with a not dissimilar trio of characters, and dealing with them with the cultivated humour and butterfly charm for which the young Guitry is celebrated, the piece carries with it the boulevard air and sense of the world so essential to this species of playwriting and yet so rarely encountered. Guitry's frothy little affairs, for years the delight of the Parisian, are unique in the theater. A touch of high comedy, a touch of low farce, a touch of wistful sentimental fantasy, a touch even of *revue* (for Guitry has in such things as "Après," produced in the Théâtre Michel, dabbled in the libretto)—all go into the composition of a typical Guitry play. And the result is as of a gay story told in a comfortable club corner, an alluring adventure in a far twilit street, a flirtation at the florist's, a cane-swinging saunter down the Champs Elysées, a cocktail or two or three, a saucy give and take, in the company of an amiable and very agreeable gentleman.

This Guitry represents a phase of the theater that has always intrigued me. A distilled composite in artistic personality of Max Dearly, Thaddeus Rittner, Clare Kummer, G. P. Huntley, the earlier Arthur Schnitzler and a round half-dozen of the Rue Chaptal farce writers, the comedies he designs for the use of himself and Charlotte Lysés, his wife,

are without question among the best examples of thoroughbred and polished boulevard diversion that the current European theater knows. They are, true enough, not important writing—they are the stuff merely of transient chuckles and internal smilings—but they accomplish better the thistle-farce they set out to accomplish than any other such present-day plays I know of. Such Guitry things as "Jean III, ou L'Irresistible Vocation du Fils Mon-doucet," "La Prise de Berg-op-Zoom," "Un Beau Mariage," "Le Veilleur de Nuit," "Le Mufle" and "La Scandale de Monte Carlo" are among the most gratifying light theatrical memories of Paris before the war. And of these there is none more amusing than the piece given us now as "Sleeping Partners."

The Hicks adaptation—it is in the main rather mere translation—is, however, considerably beneath the quality of the Megrue work. Mr. John D. Williams, the producer, has done wisely in carefully deleting from it most of the disastrous English puns and heavy attempts at English *l'allegro*, as well as the anti-climax of Hicks' second act—though the tag of the play with its comical pulling off of the sleeping husband's boots might, it seems to me, have been better left in. The local producer's metamorphosing of the central French character into an Englishman is a well-advised stroke, since there is no actor on the English-speaking stage anything like Guitry and since the performance of this rôle of the volatile Frenchman by a heavy cockney in the Hicks London version was approximately as relevant and artistic as a railroad wreck. The best performance in the American version is that of Miss Irene Bordoni, a Frenchwoman, in the rôle of the young married woman under siege: a really adroit bit of farce comedy acting. Mr. H. B. Warner, though, is scarcely the man for the Guitry part, however trickily such a part may be adapted. A Guitry rôle, adapt it how you will, calls for a combination of John Drew and Raymond Hitchcock

—that is what Guity himself is largely like—and the combination is perhaps not to be found in a single actor on either the London or New York stage. But the farce remains nonetheless entertainment of a sparkling post-graduate order—with “Tea for Three” as spry entertainment as you might find anywhere on the Continent. It brings to our home stage a lesson in light farcical playwriting; it assists in the cultivation of the home stage; and it provides—or at least it should provide—such American playmakers as, let us say, the Hattons, with an illuminating example of how a risqué theme may be handled by a sound, well-bred and genteel craftsman that it shall not, as in the numerous Hatton enterprises, have the aspect of morning-after sin. Mr. Williams, along with the Selwyns, is hereby awarded a silk rosette.

III

IN my perhaps sometimes unjust critical canon, a dramatist is held always to be as strong as his weakest banality. It is because of this and because in the midst of even the best of his good writing he descends now and then to the most doggrel showhouse platitude, that I hold Mr. Haddon Chambers in less than the common esteem. If a man writes a distinctly first-rate play, but somewhere—and however briefly—in that play makes a small joke on Watt Street or Swiss cheese or Yonkers, my prejudiced by-laws cry oolala—and the fellow, for all his otherwise distinctly first-rate work, slides into the coal hole.

Thus, though in his latest play, “The Saving Grace,” Mr. Chambers exhibits a considerable measure of finished writing, polished humour and occasionally dexterous characterization, the resident impression I take away from the piece is of the butler sneaking the usual two drinks of sherry on the sly and, upon the sound of footsteps, gliding away from the decanter, the meanwhile whistling in innocent nonchalance.

Were minutes hours or even half-

hours, Mr. Chambers would be an excellent dramatist. In his almost every piece of writing for the stage, he discloses various minutes of sound worth. But these separated minutes, save possibly in his “Tyranny of Tears,” are ever drowned in overwhelming waves of inconsequent observation and the more or less manifest theatrical dodges. There are several such valuable minutes in his most recent play at the Empire—one of them, a scene wherein two women analyze a flirtation of other days, being especially taking. But they, as in his other plays, are surrounded and riddled to the death by overtures in which two typical Jerome K. Jerome servants set the table and identify the characters presently due to appear, and by the be-whiskered hokum of the faithful family retainer who gulps and nobly declines to leave the financially distressed employer, and by the equally bearded platitude of the last-moment telegram that turns the hero's fortunes, and analogous dramatic crutches. Mr. Cyril Maude, in the central rôle of the British army captain under disgrace for running off with his colonel's wife and heart-broken because the war department will not consider his services for the Flanders field, gives a first-rate imitation of Mr. Charles Hawtrey, who originated the rôle in London. Miss Laura Hope Crews is excellent, for the first time in her career, as the sentimental wife; and Miss Cathleen Nesbitt, as the ingénue, expresses periodic gratification by displaying her wisdom teeth.

IV

Two days before the opening of the new Selwyn Theater in West Forty-second Street, the management by uniformed special messenger sent me, in the stead of the reviewer's conventional pasteboard tickets of admission, a box from Tiffany's wherein, amid a wealth of tissue paper, lay a handsome leather case (also from Tiffany's) wherein in turn, amid more tissue paper, lay a magnificent sterling silver plate (also from Tiffany's) engraved with my

name, a number of gorgeous scrolls and circumbendiba, and the legend "Admit two." Obviously, said I to myself, on gazing upon this costly boon—obviously, said I, the MM. Selwyn are about to open their new *musée* with an especial *pièce de resistance*, a true goody, a something extra-fine. This must be, I said, since for such things as Forbes-Robertson's "Hamlet" and "Cæsar and Cleopatra" the Shuberts had sent me by the mere mails the ordinary stereotyped cardboard tickets, since for Bernhardt's "L'Aiglon" the Frohman office had merely scribbled on a somewhat dirty scrap of paper the figure 2, and since for Duse's "Heimat" in Paris, I well recalled, the manager had simply shouted to one of the ushers to give me whatever decent seat he could find vacant. In view of all this, repeated I to myself as I gazed upon the MM. Selwyns' dazzling grant, in view of all this, said I, the MM. Selwyn must have something vintage, some impeccable bijou, some great ruby, to set out before me. Here, whispered I, would be no merely fine drama, but something literally to floor and stun: a drama to remember when other dramas had long gone, a drama to thunder its echoes down the esplanade of time.

So came the night of the event. Impressed and not a little *bouleversé* by the handsome leather case and my magnificent sterling silver ticket, I dressed with unwonted and scrupulous care, essaying full half a dozen ties until one suited punctiliously the contour of my chin and a half dozen pairs of pumps until the leather of one matched precisely the shade of my trousers' braid. A bit of pomade upon my hair, a boutonnière, a flip to the topper—and the glass satisfied me I was appropriate to the great occasion. To Delmonico's then, the handsome leather case and my magnificent sterling silver ticket in my pocket, for a properly preparatory repast. A slice of Honey Dew, consommé Sultan, a timbale à la Condé, red-snapper à la Vénitienne, a côtelette de Chevreuil, a sorbet, chapous truffes, poires à la Richelieu, gâteau Baba aux

fruits—and *en passant* a Taverne cocktail, a pint of Perier Jouet, a bit of Johannisberger Blue Seal 1862 and a few tablespoons of cognac to wash it down. A Partagas Extremoso Delicioso, a victoria—the handsome leather case and my magnificent sterling silver ticket would deign to abide no mere taximeter cab—and, heigho *cocher*, I was arrived at the MM. Selwyns' pylon!

I was, I confess it, agog. The lobby flooded the night with a thousand brilliant lights. The MM. Selwyn, dressed to kill, stood beside an immense horseshoe of pink roses and, beaming spacious beams, addressed to me words of welcome. The aged keeper of the door bowed meekly as I flashed him with my handsome leather case and my magnificent sterling silver ticket. The elegant head usher, glimpsing my handsome leather case and my magnificent sterling silver ticket, saluted me *à la militaire*. The but slightly less elegant assistant head usher followed suit and hastened to signal one of the menial ushers to escort me to my chair. Grandly was I led by this menial through an Italian Renaissance *promenoir* unstintedly embellished with gilt Byzantine griffins, silver Assyrian hippogriffs, still lifes by Candido Vitali, the flags of the Allies, a Greek urn or two, several Louis XIV tapestries, a Roycroft library table, a number of baskets of artificial poppies and goldenrod, and four or five of Lewis and Conger's sociable brass spittoons—and waved into the *fauteuil* designated on my magnificent sterling silver ticket.

I was breathless with the grandeur of it all. And profoundly moved and expectant. Hauptmann at the very least! mused I. And, even so, this Hauptmann fellow would under the circumstances be at his best none too good. Or mayhap Rostand! Yet this Rostand also would under the circumstances be something of a disappointment even at *his* best. The MM. Selwyns' plum was unquestionably a more juicy one. I looked at the handsome leather case and my magnificent sterling silver ticket

(allowed in my keeping as a souvenir of the high event), and was certain.

The big orchestra boomed out "The Star Spangled Banner" and, with the audience to its feet, the national emblem was flung proudly in dedication across the proscenium. . . . Andreyev or von Hofmannsthal! One or the other, I was now sure. Nothing less! . . . The big orchestra, the audience again seated, was at the overture, the "Mirelle" of Gounod . . . At least de Cured or Björnsterne Björnson, I would have bet my shirt! Or perchance some posthumously discovered Ms. of Strindberg. Or something of Schnitzler or Tchekhov. Or even—though this was under the circumstances unthinkable—a vulgar descent to Gorki or Heijermans or Gabriele D'Annunzio . . . The orchestra became silent . . . A lung-filled hush swept the auditorium . . . The lights became very, very slowly dim . . . The luxurious plush curtain rose.

"Don't she look just like a picture!!" ecstatically exclaimed a fat actress in a maid's costume, peering through some pink curtains at the left of the stage.

The pink curtains were pulled apart and revealed the leading woman in a pink nightgown trimmed with dyed pussy languishing in a pink bed and making winks at the friends out front.

I seized my gorgeous program in seven colours printed upon vellum. And this is what I saw:

Jane Cowl
in
"Information, Please!"
by
Jane Cowl.

V

ALTHOUGH announced as a direct translation from the Russian, the version of Tolstoi's "Living Corpse" presented by Mr. Arthur Hopkins under the title of "Redemption" impresses me rather as a direct translation from the

German translation used by Reinhardt in 1913. And this impression is heightened by the more or less obvious patterning of the staging of the local Hopkins production after the formulæ and tactical practises of the Berlin impresario. Save in the slight toning down of the realism of the eighth scene of the play—that occurring in the dive—and in the rather dubious abandonment of the pivotal stage, the Hopkins presentation parallels unmistakably the physical gestures of the Reinhardt production. The so-called suggestive, or "unconscious projection," direction regularly employed by Hopkins stems, of course, also from Reinhardt (*via* Craig)—it is known on the Continent by the phrase "Innere Regie"—and this contrives further to make the local exhibition keep step with the overseas one. This, plainly enough, is recorded not in criticism of Mr. Hopkins, who has selected his model with ten times the artistic good sense vouchsafed by his colleagues in the selections of their models—when they select any—but in criticism of a daily press that has read a high and compelling originality into the local production.

Of the drama itself, it may be said only that, while left in rough, fragmentary form by Tolstoi upon his death, it is yet quite as heavy-heeled and dull as if he had lived to finish and perfect it. From first to last, it is without form, without distinction, without inspiration of whatever kidney. The obscure Ossip Dymov's "Nju," a poor enough play, is still a vastly better piece of writing. Tolstoi, in the grave as afoot, remains a sound literary and dramatic theory reduced by a second-rate craftsman to mere sound. The company of actors chosen by Mr. Hopkins to speak the manuscript is of no particular mark. Mr. John Barrymore, in the leading rôle of Fédyá, fulsomely praised by the local Leweses, seems to me to accomplish little more in the way of acting the rôle than to give a remarkably life-like impersonation and imitation of Willie Howard.

THE LATE MR. WELLS

By H. L. Mencken

I

THE decline of H. G. Wells, first plainly visible, to the grief of the judicious, in "The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman," and since showing progressively in "Bealby," "Boon," "The Soul of a Bishop" and various dips into theology and journalism, now culminates in something scarcely distinguishable from collapse in "Joan and Peter" (*Macmillan*). This latest Wells novel is not merely bad; it is almost intolerable. An ancient Wellsista, delighting in the Wells manner and even in the Wells mannerism, I have been at the job of reading it for days and days, endlessly halted and daunted by its laborious dullness, its gaping hollowness, its almost fabulous stupidity. It is nearly impossible to believe that the Wells of "Tono-Bungay" and "The History of Mr. Polly" actually wrote it, or that he was in the full possession of his faculties when he allowed it to be printed under his name. For in it there is the one fault that the Wells of yesteryear, beyond all other fictioneers of his race and time, was least capable of—the fault of dismalness, of tediousness, the witless and contagious coma of the evangelist and pedagogue. Here, for nearly six hundred pages of fine type, he rolls on in an intellectual cloud, boring one abominably with uninteresting people, pointless situations, revelations that reveal nothing, arguments that have no appositiveness, expositions that expose naught save an insatiable and torturing garrulity. Where is the old fine address of the man? Where is his sharp eye for the salient and intriguing in character? Where is his instinct for form,

his skill at putting a story together, his hand for making it unwind itself? These things are so far gone that it becomes hard to believe that they ever existed. I do not exaggerate when I say that there is not the slightest sign of them in "Joan and Peter." The book is a botch from end to end, and in that botch there is not even the palliation of an arduous enterprise gallantly attempted. No inherent difficulty is visible. The story is anything but complex, and surely anything but subtle. Its badness lies wholly in the fact that the author has made a mess of the writing, that his quondam cunning, once so vast and so exhilarating, is no more.

What has become of it is a problem to engage literary pathologists. In the earlier stages of its decline, which began in 1915, I was disposed to put the blame upon the war. In other quarters the gigantic strains of the long and searching struggle show themselves plainly. The spectacle that Kipling has made of himself is not isolated, but almost typical; a great many other gentlemen of letters, high and low, have lost their heads and made asses of themselves in exactly the same way. I need name only Chesterton, Belloc and Doyle. But despite the apparent evidence of his descent to religion, the last refuge of men who find the facts of life too much for them, I doubt that Wells deserves to be classed with these war-ridden bawlers, for he has held himself pretty far above their worst hysteria, and I see in him no sign of their obvious belief that Berlin may be taken by mere moral indignation. Nay, the trouble with him is deeper, and goes back further. You will find, if you have pa-

tience enough to read so far, certain plain indications of its character in the present book—for example, on pages 272 *et seq.* What ails him is a gradual acceptance, corrupting to the artist and scarcely less so to the man, of the notion that he is one of the Great Thinkers of his era, charged with a pregnant Message to the Younger Generation—that his ideas, rammed into enough skulls, will Save the Empire, not only from the satanic Nietzscheism of von Hindenburg and friends, but also from all those Inner Weaknesses that taint and flabbergast its vitals, as the tapeworm with nineteen heads devoured Atharippus of Macedon. In brief, he suffers from a messianic delusion, than which, in this valley of chagrin, there ain't hardly nothing more damnder.

I point, as I say, to page 272, whereon, imperfectly concealed by jocosity, you will find Wells' latest view of Wells—a view at once too flattering and libellous. What it shows is a lamentable falling off in intellectual form—a sad, sad yielding, after heroic resistance, to the worst of the infirmities that can beset an artist. The man impinged upon us and made his mark, not as a master of banal pedagogics, but as a master of brilliant and life-like representation—a far rarer and more precious thing. It was the stupendous spectacle of life, and not its dubious and unintelligible lessons, that first drew him from his test-tubes and guinea-pigs and made an artist of him, and to the business of that artist he brought a vision so keen, a point of view so fresh and sane and a talent for exhibition so lively and original that he straightway conquered all of us. Nothing could exceed the sheer radiance of "Tono-Bungay." It is a work that projects a whole epoch with unforgettable effect. It is a moving picture conceived and arranged, not by the usual ex-bartender or chorus-man, but by a highly civilized and sophisticated observer, alert to every detail and yet acutely aware of the internal play of forces, the essential springs and currents, the larger and deeper lines of it. In brief, it is a work of art of the

highest respectability, for it both presents a vivid and recognizable image and subjects that image to a sly and highly penetrating editing. This is the true task of the artist in prose fiction: first to make the thing brilliantly real and then to bring out its significance—to make it interpretation as well as representation. Wells did this excellently, almost superbly. His scene was filled with genuine human beings, and about them there played the lights of a vivacious and unhackneyed mind.

But in the success of the book there was a temptation and in the temptation a peril. The audience was there, high in expectation, eagerly gaping for more. And in the ego of the man—a true proletarian, and hence born with morals, faiths, certainties—there was an urge. He could not rest content with the achievement of the artist. It was not enough to display the life of his time with accuracy and understanding; it was not even enough to criticise it with sagacity and humor. From the depths of his being, like some unescapable miasma, there arose the old, fatuous yearning to change it, to improve it, to set it right where it was wrong. With this sinister impulse—as aberrant in an artist as a taste for legs in an archbishop—the instinct that made "Tono-Bungay" gave battle, and at first with some success. "Anne Veronica" was capital stuff; "The History of Mr. Polly" was still better; "The New Machiavelli" was almost as good. But with "Marriage" there came a sudden change: one heard the unmistakable bray of the evangelist. And with "The Passionate Friends" it began to sound stridently, and since then it has drowned out all more seemly music. Today one must rank Wells as he has begun to rank himself—not among the literary artists of England, but among the tinpot prophets and soap-boxers of England. His old rival was Arnold Bennett; his new rival is the Fabian Society. And in making the change he has lost, characteristically, all the humor that went with his earlier incarnation. "The New Machiavelli" made

one glow; "Joan and Peter" merely makes one groan.

In thesis the book is an attack upon education in England, but neither the complaint so elaborately set forth nor the remedy so obscurely preached is worth all that deluge of words. I find, indeed, nothing new in either, and nothing very convincing. One gets but brief and disorderly glimpses of the schools under fire; far more vivid and impressive pictures have been done by other hands, and not once, but scores of times. The universities, toward which the whole phillipic points, are dismissed after long preparation with a few platitudes. One wonders, in the end, precisely what the author is driving at, what reforms he specifically advocates. First one hears that England is going to pot because English education is too formal and archaic; then one hears that Germany is going to pot because German education is too realistic. Under it all is the grotesquely fallacious assumption of the reformer at all times and everywhere: that human beings may be made over by changing the rules under which they live, that progress is a matter of sapient enactments. Let us hope that Wells, for the good of his soul, gives a couple of days' study to "How to Lengthen Our Ears," by Viscount Harberton, reviewed in this place last month. And that he postpones the reform of the English schools for a while and turns his eye upon those of the United States, wherein all his remedies have been tried and all of them have failed.

Valueless as a social document, "Joan and Peter" is almost wholly without interest as a series of human portraits. Most of them, indeed, are no more life-like than the lithographs on the tops of candy-boxes. It would be difficult to imagine a more wooden figure than Lady Charlotte Sydenham—the sniffish dowager out of bad Pinero-Jones farce. Or than Huntley, the satanic novelist of the lady novelists. Or than Oswald Sydenham, the uncle and guardian of Peter and Joan—a mere clothes-horse for hanging theories on—two separate

men crudely glued together to make a cog in the machine. Even Peter and Joan themselves lack reality. One never feels that they are working out their destiny; one feels that they are mere dummies in a sort of compound of debate and charade. . . . In brief, a very bad piece of work. Not merely Wells at his worst, but Wells at the worst that current novel-writing has come to. Let us hope that he will purge himself of this stupidity. The applause of dunderheads is killing him.

II

WHAT makes his collapse all the more dramatic is the fact that his old competitor, Arnold Bennett, has quite escaped any such catastrophe. Bennett, it seems to me, is a man who started out with an equipment a good deal less complete and effective than that of Wells. For one thing, there is a temperamental lack: he is quite incapable of deep emotion, and hence incapable of projecting it from the printed page. This is a handicap of the heaviest sort, for all representative art, in the last analysis, depends largely upon pure feeling. If the artist cannot arouse that feeling in the spectator, if he cannot enlist the spectator's deepest and least definable emotions, then he is thrown back upon purely intellectual devices, and the world is so stupid that purely intellectual devices seldom hold its attention very long. Yet Bennett has somehow managed the business, partly by developing a truly gigantic virtuosity and partly by shrewd appeals to the vanity of his readers. There is, in many of his books, something indistinguishable from flattery. "All this, of course," he seems to say, "is not the usual style of novel-writing; but you and I, remember, are above any such puerility. The vulgar blubber; let us snicker." I find that note in "The Old Wive's Tale," and, above all, in the third volume of the "Clayhanger" trilogy. It is the precise opposite of Dreiser's unashamed (and highly effective) pumping up of emotion, and perhaps explains the great

esteem in which Bennett is held by young college professors, bluestockings and other such brummagem Advanced Thinkers. I haven't the slightest doubt that he chuckles over such victims, as he must surely chuckle over those who take his so-called "pocket philosophies" seriously. The man is simply too intelligent to believe that intelligence is common enough to make an audience for a popular novel. If he knows anything at all he surely knows that the typical novel-reader is a fat woman in a kimona, as the typical critic of novels (at least in America and England) is an old maid, male or female, full of coryza and Freudian suppressions. To the enchantment of such *intelligentsia* he addresses himself, and, being unable to do it by making them snuffle, he does it by making them sniff.

There is, of course, a double danger in the method. On the one hand his disdain of his readers may occasionally reveal itself, and so make them suddenly suspicious. And on the other hand his native cynicism may occasionally get out of hand, and so lead him into excesses that offend his public. Example of the first accident: "The Lion's Share" (*Doran*). Example of the second: "The Pretty Lady" (*Doran*). The latter I reviewed some time ago, and in terms verging upon the encomiastic. But I find that, in the main, it has got bad notices, both in England and in the United States. And why? Simply because he presents a view of the war, and particularly of the psychological reactions of the war, that is at sharp variation with the popular view. The typical figure in current fiction is a man whose whole life has been revolutionized by the great conflict—a man who has reacted to it emotionally and colossally—in brief, a sort of standardized Mr. Britling, with overtones of the nearest moving-picture actor. But the central figure in Bennett's story is a man who takes the thing calmly, almost casually—a man who does his bit, but without the slightest show of melodrama—in brief, an aloof and unperturbed sort of fellow, not unlike Bennett himself.

Well, such a man, at such a time as this, somehow strikes the conventional mind as obnoxious. He is not doing the sort of thing that the rules of romance require him to do. Instead of beating his breast tragically because he is too old for the trenches, or turning over his whole fortune to the nearest war-bazaar committee, or entering the Secret Service, or making speeches, he takes charge of certain dull financial arrangements, performs the business quietly and efficiently, lives sedately in a comfortable flat, and gives over his scant leisure to various *pianissimo* affairs of the heart, including one with a charming Frenchwoman. In a word, a cool-headed, self-respecting and very useful man—but too intelligent, too placid, too cynical. And the war in the background? Superb as spectacle!—what, indeed, could be more vivid than the Zeppelin raid?—but deficient as Lesson. No one is converted to anything. No one resolves to lead a different life. No one postures. Hence the reviling of Bennett.

"The Lion's Share" is altogether unlike "The Pretty Lady." The latter is a very fine piece of writing, Bennett at his cleverest, a triumph of virtuosity. The former is a mere pot-boiler—sound in craft, true enough, but without any sign of sincerity. The book-sellers call for something; it is time to print again; well, here goes another! One imagines the author at opening exercises of some such sort as he searches his pigeon-hole of notes and spits upon his hands. What shall it be? Note No. 1: "A young Englishwoman, conventionally reared, inherits a large fortune. In despair of getting any fun out of it at home she buys a wedding ring, gives out that she is a widow, and goes to Paris." Very well, so be it! And thus there gradually unrolls a popular novel of 426 pages—fair measure for \$1.50. But, from first to last, it is machine-made, a mere essay in technique. And from first to last the author is forever loosing stealthy snickers—first at his heroine, then at the Paris she plunges into, and finally at his readers. "If this," he seems to say, "is the sort of stuff you

want, then here is a horse-doctor's dose of it. I am delighted to have your trade, but don't ask me to share your taste. Here is what you seem to like, and here, also, is a burlesque of what you seem to like." Sometimes the burlesque, as in the present case, is rather thick and obvious; but even so, it is safer by far than the hard brilliancy of "The Pretty Lady," for no man, without the aid of drugs, nets and hired confederates, could well overestimate the imbecility of the public, whereas many a man has come to grief by overestimating its wit by ever so little. The hatred of the stupid for those who are less stupid is, indeed, one of the permanent moving forces of human society. It explains almost everything that passes under the name of sound sentiment, and nearly as much that passes under the name of rectitude.

As for Bennett, to return to him, he seems to me to be lifting himself far above direct rivalry with Wells. His movement is toward, say, Anatole France; the movement of Wells is toward, say, Sir Walter Besant. The younger men in England divide themselves in much the same way. A few of them, notably W. L. George and Hugh Walpole, stand clear of evangelism and all its pishposh; but the great majority—the Cannans and so on—roll head over heels down the Golden Stair. It is curious to note that nearly all those of the former party show foreign influence, chiefly French. Spiritual exogamy is the salvation of the arts, and of general cultures no less. It seems impossible for any nation, without stimulation from without, to flower æsthetically. Imagine a pure and uncontaminated American, say out of Iowa or Mississippi or Colorado, developing into the first-rate, or even into a third-rate artist. Nay, he must be debauched first by the enchantment of strange coasts. France brews the right medicine for him; but, failing France, even England has an ale that helps him.

III

A good many very bad novels pile up.

"The Ghost Garden," by Amélie Rives (*Stokes*), is of the vintage of 1888: an archaic and extremely tedious piece of bosh. "Our Admirable Betty," by Jeffrey Farnol (*Little-Brown*), is a weak reboiling of the bones of "The Broad Highway." "The Zeppelin's Passenger," by E. Phillips Oppenheim (*Little-Brown*); "The Mystery of Hartley House," by Clifford S. Raymond (*Doran*), and "The Room With the Tassels," by Carolyn Wells (*Doran*), are boob-bumpers sufficiently described by their titles. "The Blue Germ," by Martin Swayne; "The Island Mystery," by G. A. Birmingham, and "Thieves' Wit," by Hulbert Footner (all *Doran*), are of the same general class, though somewhat better. "The Soul of Susan Yellam," by Horace Annesley Vachell; "Beatrice Ashleigh," by F. E. Mills Young, and "The Silent Legion," by J. E. Buckrose (all *Doran*), are war novels. As for describing them in detail, I beg to be let off. It is not a favorable time for prose fiction of any merit. The publishers, facing restrictions on their output and various other onerous conditions, are forced to print the sort of stuff that is pretty sure of a satisfactory sale, and that sort of stuff is chiefly balderdash. When one happens upon a novel of sound interest, it is apt to bear the imprint of some small and newly-hatched experimentalist, not yet chastened by experience. Thus "The Heart of Nami-San," a Japanese novel by Kenjiro Tokutomi, done into English by Dr. Isaac Goldberg, is published by the Stratford Company, which specializes in the exotic. And George Moore's "A Story-Teller's Holiday" is privately printed. And Cardoc Evans' "Capel Sion" is an importation.

The Evans book is made up of fifteen short sketches, all dealing with the Welsh Methodists who appear in the same author's "My People," reviewed in this place in August. It would be difficult to imagine more repellant types. Under their furious religious frenzy lies a barbarism that is almost savagery; they are in the Stone Age culturally, with a medieval talent for cruelty added.

And yet the point of view from which they are depicted is anything but that of superior scorn and indignation. Somehow, Evans gets into his portraits of them a sense of their helplessness. They are the end-products of centuries of imbecile theology, playing resistlessly upon a simple and credulous folk. Here, one feels, is what happens when evangelical Christianity is genuinely believed—and it happens in many a village of the American hinterland quite as well as on these bleak Welsh farms. It would be a delicate whimsicality for some anarchistic philanthropist to put a copy of the book in every Sunday-school library in America. Myself in sore straits financially and scarcely getting enough to eat, I should yet be delighted to donate a hundred copies to the Y. M. C. A. It is a *reductio ad horrendum* (if my Latin is sound) of that pious rectitude which bases itself upon fear of the devil.

Evans, in a way, has developed a new form of fiction in these austere sketches. There is little if any objective discussion of the characters or of their doings. They are permitted to account for themselves in their own words; what one discovers is less a story in the usual sense than a drama with a fluent scene. I am told by Welshmen that the author's handling of the Welsh peasant dialect is extraordinarily accurate. If so, then it is almost unique among the dialects of English, for it differs from the standard speech, not in inflection and vocabulary, nor even in pronunciation, but in syntax. The sentence is constructed in a special way—roughly speaking, stood on its end. The verb, which almost always follows the substantive in English and in the other English dialects, here goes before the substantive, and often opens the sentence. Thus, one finds, not "Jane's father is rich," but "Rich is Jane's father." These philological peculiarities, however, neither form the chief interest of the book nor stand as an impediment to the reading of it. What gives it distinction is its quite unusual vividness—the sense of reality that one

gets out of it. Evans, in a few paragraphs, creates characters that genuinely live. He is a newcomer of cunning and originality, and the discreet will keep an eye open for what he does hereafter.

The Moore book, like its predecessor, "The Brook Kerith," is a tall and bulky volume, and at more than one place the high flame of the reader's engrossment sinks to an enfeebled glow. It is, in fact, a good deal overwritten. Moore, in his old age, becomes as garrulous as an ancient dame, particularly when he is on such subjects as ancient dames traditionally affect. In a brief preface headed "A Leave-Taking" (his farewells, alas, grow as numerous as Patti's or Col. Roosevelt's) he says that he has printed "A Story-Teller's Holiday" privately because the puissance of comstockery in England made it impossible for any publisher to issue it in the customary manner. What goes on over there seems to be a rough copy of what goes on over here. On this side of the water every large city houses a society of professional smuthounds, and its agents get their living by purveying entertainment to its subscribers. This entertainment takes the standard form of raids upon books and magazines, and is of a double charm, for on the one hand the subscribers get the fun of seeing some poor author jump and on the other hand they are afforded private views of the offending texts. The sport, because of the skill of our jurisconsults, is quite safe. Even in case judge and jury decide in his favor, the author can get no redress, for the society is an anonymous without financial responsibility, and its agents hide behind it. In England, judging by Moore's complaint, there is a slight difference. That is to say, proceedings against books are commonly filed by responsible individuals, and so it is possible to sue them for damages in case their prosecutions fail. But English juries, it would appear, have a habit of protecting them by refusing to find damages, and so the net result is what it is in America. Such a refusal ended

the litigation over "The Brook Kerith"; the book was judicially declared to be not obscene, but a jury refused to mulct the Wesleyan who denounced it. Wherefore the appearance of "A Story-Teller's Holiday" with the private imprint of a probably mythical Gaelic society. "By private printing," says Moore, "our author has cut himself off from many readers, but the alternative was for him to cease writing."

Well, what is in the book? So far as I can make out, not much that would tempt an American scandal-snouter to get out his dark-lanterns, scaling-ladders and pad of blank warrants. It is obvious, of course, that the thing is bound to arouse indignation in ecclesiastical circles, at least of the Roman rite, for it deals largely with amorous episodes in religious houses; but a mere ecclesiastical libel is not sufficient to bestir the secular arm in these States. Moreover, nearly all comstocks are either Methodists or Presbyterians, and so they are in secret in favor of anything that outrages Catholics, and not apt to proceed against it. But beyond this fact lies the more important fact that the book, save in a few passages, is not actually very naughty. Whole chapters of it might be read aloud at a Christian Endeavor meeting without inoculating the assembled members, or even the rev. pastor, with lascivious fancies. With a few discreet mummings, indeed, the entire work might be intoned, at all events in safely Protestant circles. Only one of the tales which enter into it is improper *per se*, and that one might be denaturized by any talented newspaper copy-reader in half an hour. As for the rest, I publicly offer to get it through the mails after deleting no more than five hundred words. Thus it fails as a hair-raiser, and I should be false to my critical conscience if I did not warn you that, buying it to save coal this winter, you will be skun.

As an example of beautiful letters it is a good deal more satisfying, if only because of the melodious murmur of word and phrase that Moore gets into

the writing of it. His style improves, indeed, as he grows older. Put the book beside "Confessions of a Young Man" or "A Mummer's Wife" and you will see what progress he has made in the delicate brewing and distilling of English. I do not mouth here the old gabble about "the inevitable word." The inevitable word, however, adroitly dredged out of Soule, cannot make a whole sentence that caresses and sings, and, above all, it cannot make a whole page. This is what Moore manages to accomplish, and he does it steadily from end to end, and, as if to prove his virtuosity, in more than one way. There is, first, the style of the main narrative—the account of the trip to Ireland and the meeting with Alec Trusselby, the rustic story-teller. Then there is, secondly, the style of the stories that Alec tells—as free and piquant as the style of "Riders to the Sea," but altogether different. And then there is, finally, the style of the stories that Moore tells—somewhat tighter, but still very charming. In brief, the book is a capital bravura piece. It must delight as that if it fails to delight in any other way.

The Japanese novel of Tokutomi is interesting chiefly because it is Japanese; if it had been done by an Englishman or an American it would be frankly second-rate; but as it is it arrests the attention because of its unusualness. If Tokutomi is the leading Japanese novelist, as Dr. Goldberg hints, then the Japs are still in the preparatory department of novel-writing, but in more than one place it shows a talent that is at least very promising, and before many years have come and gone it may be that the Nipponese will be producing our current fiction in bulk, as they now produce our Swedish safety-matches, English haberdashery and German drugs. Surely there must be other Japanese novelists, and perhaps some good Japanese short-story writers. May we trust Dr. Goldberg, who seems to know all literature, to unearth and exhibit them?

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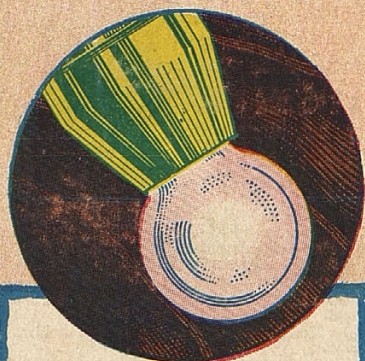
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